SHIFTING GEARS ON SCHEDULING PRACTICES:

5 WAYS TO STREAMLINE YOUR SCHEDULING PROCESS
CAN FORM FOLLOW FUNCTION IN SCHEDULING?

Setting up shifts and managing scheduling - how hard can it be? For businesses that rely on hourly or shift-based employees, scheduling workers is a time-consuming, complex and error-prone process. A poor scheduling process can reduce employee morale, hurt the company’s reputation and negatively impact its bottom line.

There’s no formula for perfect scheduling, but there are emerging best practices that when combined with the right tools can improve communication and employee morale, as well as reduce absenteeism and turnover rates.

At Humanity we’ve taken our experience in employee scheduling and combined it with insights from industry thought leaders, government reports, national statistics, policy papers and even senate bills to develop recommendations that will help your business dramatically improve your scheduling process.

Did you know?

59% of the U.S. workforce consists of hourly workers according to a recent report by United States Labor Bureau.¹

THIS GUIDE WILL TEACH YOU HOW TO:

1. EVALUATE YOUR SCHEDULE EFFECTIVENESS
2. BALANCE EMPLOYEE REQUESTS WITH BUSINESS NEEDS
3. DEVELOP CLEAR POLICIES FOR SHIFT CHANGES
4. BETTER COMMUNICATE WITH EMPLOYEES ABOUT YOUR LEAVE MANAGEMENT POLICIES
5. ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES AND IMPROVE THE SCHEDULING PROCESS FOR EVERYONE.
Whether you’re using Excel, an in-house solution or another method to manage scheduling it’s a good idea to conduct a quick audit once in awhile to pinpoint areas that are causing stress-inducing mishaps.

To start your audit, pull out your latest schedule, then use the questionnaire on the next page to assess your scheduling practices. You can go to the next page to download the document and print it out, or fill out your answers directly within the web-based version.

Follow the questions in the audit and allot yourself points in the “Points Available” category if the action listed is present in your scheduling process. Calculate your total score and see where you fall on the scale.

**BONUS** As you’re going through the questions, notice which scheduling tasks you’ve done well and what areas you’d like to improve. The Optional Details column will provide you with further insights to strengthen your scheduling process.
### Scheduling Basics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Running Total</th>
<th>Optional Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you give your employees 1 week of notice or less when posting the schedule?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you give your employees at least 2 weeks notice when releasing the schedule?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you give employees at least 3 weeks notice when releasing the schedule?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the start and finish times for all shifts on the schedule clearly indicated?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Start time:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does each day contain the correct types of positions required for the time period, e.g. cashiers, shift managers, etc.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the schedule list each employee's total number of hours assigned for that schedule period?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are any employees double-booked on the schedule?</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>If yes, why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any partial or split shifts present on the schedule?</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the schedule manually created by hand, white board, or excel?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the schedule created by an automated system?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you use a POS system?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Type:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you referencing your sales data when creating the schedule?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Budget Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Running Total</th>
<th>Optional Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you determine what the total cost of staffing should be for all shifts on the schedule?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you plan for the cost of overtime hours for any shifts on the schedule?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cost of total scheduled hours:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there discrepancies between total hours scheduled and actual hours worked by employees?</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Actual hours worked:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there discrepancies between the total amount of scheduled overtime hours and the actual amount of overtime hours worked by employees?</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cost of unplanned overtime:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Time Off and Vacation Request Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Running Total</th>
<th>Optional Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are time-off/vacation requests managed before the schedule is published?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a deadline for submitting time-off and shift change requests?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a list of backups/on call employees who are available in case a shift no-show?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a system where employee contact information is organized and accessible when employees/management need to make schedules changes?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your employees know what process to follow when trading shifts?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Shift Corrections and Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Running Total</th>
<th>Optional Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can shift change requests be managed and resolved in 48 hours?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there at least 4 weekly shift changes between employees after the schedule is posted?</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Actual:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you encounter at least 2 no-shows a week due to scheduling miscommunication?</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Scheduling Audit Assessment:

- **25-21 Points Smooth Scheduling Achieved!** Your schedule is in good shape and your staff rarely encounters scheduling issues. You’re good at balancing the amount of hours needed with employee availability, and you’ve also created a backup plan for unexpected absences. If you’ve achieved this score without using scheduling software, you’re a certified scheduling genius.

- **20-15 Points Scheduling Basics Covered:** You know what types of shifts are needed to keep things running smoothly and have a good sense of the staff’s availability. However, sometimes things slip through the cracks. You should check out one or two automated scheduling solutions so you can take your schedule to the next level!

- **14-10 Struggling to Schedule At All:** You are able to assign the necessary shifts to employees, but have gaps in coverage. Your budget and employees might be feeling stressed. An automated scheduling solution like Humanity will help you manage employee availability staffing costs more efficiently.

- **9-0 Points Scheduling SOS:** You are overwhelmed by configuring the schedule, keeping staff organized and keeping an eye on your budget. Your ship feels like it’s sinking, constantly. Save your schedule (and your sanity) and book a demo with Humanity now!
You may be asking yourself: “Does my scheduling process really affect my employees? Will spending time to create a better schedule really help my business?”

The answer is yes. A better schedule will help your bottom line by reducing employee absenteeism and your turnover rates.

How much is turnover costing you? On average, unexpected workplace absenteeism costs a business about $3,600 a year, per non-salaried employee, according Circadian.² Additionally, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found it costs about $3,079 to hire a new employee.³ You can save thousands of dollars by decreasing your turnover rates and the additional costs associated with replacing employees.

For hourly workers, work is not just about money - it’s about the quality of the relationships the employee has in their work environment. SHRM reports that employees rank “respectful treatment of all employees” and “trust between employees and senior management” as the two most important factors influencing overall job satisfaction.⁴

Feedback from our customers echo these sentiments. Based on our experience from working with hundreds of businesses, small and large, there are two of the best practices to combat employee absenteeism and turnover and also increase employee’s satisfaction with the schedule.

1. Release work schedules with advance notice, preferably 2 weeks in advance. Providing your employees with advanced schedules enables them to swap shifts earlier, reducing the time spent dealing with no-shows. Advanced notice creates a level of schedule predictability so workers can coordinate external needs of like child care, transportation, and balance academic pursuits.⁶

Take a note from Costco, which has been recognized for providing workers with their schedules at least 2 weeks in advance and guaranteeing workers a minimum of 24 hours each week. This practice has pay-off for the retailer, whose turnover rate is four times lower than the industry average of 60%.⁷

2. Incorporate employee shift preferences when creating a schedule. Taking employee input into consideration supports workplace flexibility and gives employees a level of control over their schedule.⁸

Compiling availability can get tricky and become a major time suck for the scheduler. This is where an online scheduling software helps schedulers thrive. Online scheduling software quickly assembles a schedule that reflects employee availability and is then distributed via email and text.

Scheduling software accomplishes both goals of timely schedule notification and accommodating shift preferences. Software Advice found that 50% of workers whose employers use scheduling software receive their schedule two weeks in advance, and that 43% of software user “always” get the shifts they want.⁹

Employees are also able initiate and conduct shift trades in a timely matter without involving their managers when schedule conflicts arise. Circadian found that when employees are given online tools to handle shift changes resolve their own schedule conflicts, have a higher level of job satisfaction and lower rates of workplace absenteeism.¹⁰

Next we’ll address how to handle shift changes and vacation requests.
SECTION 3:
SET CLEAR POLICIES FOR SHIFT CHANGES TO DECREASE SCHEDULING MISHAPS

The flexibility in changing around your schedule is one of the best perks for hourly employees. In fact, hourly employees who are able to make last minute changes to the schedule without consequence are happier, more engaged and productive workers.¹²

However, shift changes and schedule revisions are another unnecessary time suck for managers, and when not executed thoroughly, can create scheduling and workplace chaos.

Finding an efficient solution to streamline employee shift trades is one of the top reasons our customers use Humanity.

By implementing a clear process for shift changes and keeping consistent communication around these, managers and the schedulers can reduce no-show rates.

We've outlined a few great tips that will help you craft and refine a successful shift trade policy.

1. DEFINE A TIME FRAME FOR MAKING SCHEDULE CHANGES. Know the amount of time needed for all parties to make an adjustments to the schedule. If it takes 24 hours to make a change, create a rule that shift adjustments can not be made past a certain time. It’s best republish an updated schedule each time a change is made.

2. OUTLINE THE ACTION STEPS FOR CHANGING SHIFTS. Trust your employees to find a substitute before interjecting a manager. This increases communication and collaboration between workers. Just make sure the change is communicated to management within an appropriate timeframe. If you have issues with employees, require that a manager must sign off on changes.

3. MAKE SURE THESE POLICIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR REFERENCE in the breakroom, in training manuals, and in online portals if your company has a digital system. To guarantee that all employees understand the policy, create a document outlining it and ask them to read and sign the policy.

4. REMIND EMPLOYEES OF THE POLICY DURING STAFF MEETINGS. Mentioning the policy frequently to large groups of employees keeps it top of mind, keep you from repeating the policy to different individuals.

5. RECORD NO-SHOWS AND REVISIT THE SITUATION WITH THE INVOLVED PARTIES. After speaking with both employees, figure out where the breakdown in communication occurred. Our clients at Humanity use the event log to track employee and management actions when a situation arises.

Lastly, be considerate and schedule employees when they’ve expressed a need for time off during important life events like graduations, weddings, and birthdays. If you’re inflexible with requests for these types of events, be prepared for the employees to call in sick or ask for a change if you still schedule them for that specific day.

HOW HUMANITY SOLVES EMPLOYEE SHIFT TRADES

The primary concern of many of our customers is reducing the time spent on employee shift trades requests, as well as the headaches they create. With Humanity, employees can initiate shift trades and managers can determine their level of involvement.

Step 1: An employee request a trade through the app
Step 2: Other available employees are notified of the request, and can opt to pick up an extra shift
Step 3: Manager is notified of the change!
SECTION 4:
SET CLEAR POLICIES AND COMMUNICATION PATTERNS
WHEN ENFORCING SICK AND VACATION TIME

Attendance tracking and leave management is another aspect
why our customers choose Humanity. Absence management
is also an effective tactic to decrease workplace absences
and tardiness.¹³ Clear policies regarding workplace absences
protects both employees and workers communication and
employee understanding is paramount when enforcing
attendance policies.

Here are the top 5 things we recommend when creating an
attendance policy and how to communicate enforcement of
these policies with employees.

1. HAVE A WRITTEN ATTENDANCE POLICY. Makes sure it
outlines the various types of absences and the types of
disciplinary actions that follow for infractions. This includes
defining what is an acceptable absence and which kinds of
absence carry penalties.

Be specific and determine the amount of absences your
company finds appropriate for workplace operations.¹³

Be compliant: Employers who pay workers hourly must follow
the core national labor laws as well as your state's laws.
Failure to comply with these laws results financial and legal
consequences for your business, trashes your reputation as
an employer, and cost you employees.¹⁴

2. HAVE A POLICY THAT OUTLINES LEAVE REQUESTS AND
PTO. Set clear deadlines regarding the amount of notice the
employee needs to provide to an approving manager to
consider the request.

Equally important is setting a deadline for when management
must respond to a time off request. Make it clear that
requests can be rejected, however employers must honor a
time-off request once approval is granted.

3. GO OVER THE ATTENDANCE POLICY WITH EMPLOYEES.
Prevent miscommunications around workplace absences and
discuss the policy with employees when they are first hired,
and at relevant quarterly meetings.

Make sure employees have copies or can easily access the
document with these policies. If you use an online scheduling
system upload this into the portal so employees can easily
reference the rules.

4. ENFORCE AND KEEP DILIGENT RECORDS. Track tardiness,
absences and time-off requests. Employee attendance
records impacts payroll and also your ability to discipline
employees when offenses are committed.¹⁵

If you want to keep everything in the same place, online
scheduling software keeps track of all. Humanity even has a
timeclock that stamps remote employees with GPS
coordinates when they clock in to insure employees are at the
right place at the right time.

5. REWARD GOOD ATTENDANCE. Incentivizing employees for
attendance is a way to acknowledge good behavior and
increase morale.¹⁶

RESOURCES FOR CREATING YOUR COMPANY’S TIME
OFF, VACATION AND SICK POLICY:

In most businesses, vacation and workplace policies are set and
maintained by the Human Relations department. But in many
small businesses, owners and managers often take on this
complex role.

If you find that you need help, but lack the resources to hire an
human relations practitioner, there are a few tech options
available to you that can help you stay abreast of important laws
and manage the other HR related needs your business.

bambooHR

Zenefits
SECTION 5:
IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH BETTER SCHEDULING

Employee engagement should be a top priority for any organization because it combats employee turnover and directly relates to employee job satisfaction, improved levels of customer service, worker productivity and loyalty to the employer.¹

The Society for Human Resources Management found that increasing employee engagement is continually ranked as one of the leading challenges for HR professionals.¹

You can improve employee engagement through your scheduling process, too. Online scheduling software increases employee autonomy and empowers them with access and tools like shift trades and leave requests to manage their schedule. It also opens up another line of communication for employees and management.

Chances are your customers expect a personalized shopping experience, clear and helpful communication during their interaction, quick solutions to problems, and that your business is accessible by website and phone.

Employees have the same needs when it comes to their workplace schedule - and these needs will turn into standards as more Millennials enter (and will soon dominate) the workforce, with the reliance on mobile access amplifying each year.

Millennials engage with their phones 45 times a day, according to the Bank of America in its 2015 Trends in Consumer Mobility Report.²¹ If you have a scheduling software like ShiftPlanning, capitalize on the connectivity and provide employees with access to their schedules via email and mobile app.

Brian Westgfall, author of a Software Advice.com report contrasting the benefits of traditional scheduling methods v.s. using a scheduling software, found that using technology not only helps speed up the scheduling process, it engages employees:

“Perhaps the biggest advantage that dedicated scheduling software offers over other methods is that it serves as a collaborative platform. Employees can easily inform managers of preferences and availability, and keep track of their schedule themselves.”

Users seem to agree that employee-facing features set software apart. Nearly one-third of shift managers (31%) who use scheduling software say an employee self-service portal offers the most useful functionality.” ²²
If your scheduling process is effective with an audit and identified areas where your schedule is working and also areas where it can be improved.

Two key scheduling best practices that will help you reduce workplace absenteeism and turnover.

- **Posting your schedule two weeks in advance** allows workers to make shift changes, coordinate important personal details, and establishes a level of schedule predictability for your employees.

- **Incorporating employee availability and shift preference** improves morale and contributes to schedule flexibility.

- **Important aspects for employee shift changes policies**

- **The crucial components of sick and vacation policies and how to communicate with employees about them**

- **How employee engagement can be extended to your scheduling practice, and that when provided with tech tools like Humanity, employees are more likely to engage in the scheduling process and have a higher level of job satisfaction**
APPENDIX


