Success Story: Texas Corral

Corralling People, Schedules and Compliance Under HotSchedules' Labor Management Solution

The saying, "Time is money," might never be truer than in the restaurant industry—and for restaurant managers, in particular. That's why it should come as no surprise that a solution that can reduce the time spent on an arduous task from more than two days to less than two hours might be referred to by a manager as "a saving grace for my sanity."

That manager is longtime restaurant industry veteran Ken Von Holtz, who says, "I've pretty much done everything except bartend in this industry." For the past four years, he has served as general manager with the Midwest-based Texas Corral chain, which has 11 different full-service locations and multiple concepts under its corporate umbrella. The company, which has around 50 employees per location, first implemented HotSchedules Scheduling and Labor Solution back in June 2014, and the change was dramatic.

"HotSchedules has simplified scheduling to an art form," Von Holtz says.

Taking Schedules & Communication Digital

Texas Corral has been around for nearly two decades, and maybe the key to that longevity has been a willingness to adapt to changing times, which is exactly what corporate did by looking to HotSchedules to solve its paper problem.

Von Holtz saw the potential immediately, which he says isn't always the case. "I happen to be a relatively computer friendly," Von Holtz says. "I'm not a computer guru by any means, but I understand that computers are the wave of the future. When corporate started rolling out HotSchedules in the pilot program, I jumped right on board when they asked me to help.

In a Snapshot

Their story

Pen and paper weren't going to cut it for the 11-unit Texas Corral Team. After piloting HotSchedules Labor Management solution and seeing the immediate benefits of having scheduling, communication and compliance all in one solution, they rolled it out across the entire organization.

Challenges

- Paper schedules and shift transaction made scheduling chaotic.
- Multiple schedules made it hard to see who was scheduled.
- Managers often scheduled the same person for two different job types.
- Little-to-no scheduling and communication standards across stores.
- Manager and employee communication was often scattered and hard to keep track of.
- Employees relied on paper schedules and paper shift trades, a cumbersome and time-consuming process.

Solutions

HotSchedules Labor Management

Benefits

- Manager reduced scheduling time from two days to two hours and got visibility into multiple schedules, reducing errors and shift overlap.
- General manager was able to build cross-training opportunities for employees and was able to optimize staff based on sales and guest volume.
- Certification expiration tracking and alerts reduced risk of fines.

Reduced schedule management time from two days to two hours

Eliminated scheduling conflicts across job types & schedules

Reduced risk of fines using Certification Tracker & Alerts

"I've been in love with HotSchedules since day one," he added.

Throwing Out Paper Schedules

Prior to HotSchedules, Von Holtz built schedules the old-fashioned way — hard copies on paper, with an emphasis on *copies*.

"I was using way too much paper to manage the whole scheduling process," he says. "And there were always multiple paper schedules — one for the busser schedule, one for the cook schedule and the another manager schedule and another for the host schedule."

While one manager was busy writing out the host and busser schedules, another manager was simultaneously writing the server schedule.

"There were at least two employees that ended up on two different schedules for two different positions around the same time. Inevitably, someone gets screwed over when the schedules didn't coordinate."

The flood of paper piled up even higher as shift swaps and other shift transactions came in.

"Typically, if Bobby and Cindy are trading shifts, you need a piece of paper with both signatures on it, and then you have to go back to the schedule and put it in there," Von Holtz says. "Then you hand it to one manager, and they put it in one place, and the other manager doesn't see it."

The bottom line? "It was extremely confusing," he says.

Building Schedules for Efficiency and Productivity

The sheer volume of the paper schedules and amount of time it took to create them were only part of the problem. The old-school scheduling tactic also prevented Von Holtz from cross training his team members — which he's incredibly passionate about.

"Cross training our team is huge for me. But we ran into issues when two different managers were both creating schedules."

As someone who is passionate about cross training his employees, Von Holtz appreciates the streamlined scheduling HotSchedules creates across job codes.

"HotSchedules allows much more freedom for cross training to be done," he says. "Multiple schedules can

Scheduling Templates for Success

be done simultaneously and you can see everyone's availability — it makes it easy for managers to ensure everything is covered."

Prior to HotSchedules, Von Holtz was using up a good chunk of his workweek just on writing schedules.

With paper schedules, he was spending the better part of two or two and a half days making schedules, plus however much time was needed after that to swap shifts. "So it was a three day process to get the schedules finalized."

"With HotSchedules, I can complete the week's schedules in two hours and immediately communicate them out every Tuesday night."

HotSchedules Templates are a large part of that time-savings.

"I have templates set up in HotSchedules that tell me how much staff I' going to need. So the scheduling templates tell me, for example, that on Monday through Thursday I'll need three day servers, six night servers, one day host, one night host, one day busser, et cetera. And then on the weekends, the templates tell me that I'll need more. Between the scheduling templates and the drag and drop options, it's so simple."

Another HotSchedules feature Von Holtz has grown to rely on is the Certification Tracker and Notifications. Employee liquor licenses are good for two or three years. HotSchedules tracks each employee's certification expiration date.

"HotSchedules sends 90, 60 and 30 day notifications to both the employee and the manager that their certificate is going to expire. Without those notifications we may have scheduled that employee and been fined. Having the Certification Notifications helps keep everybody in check."

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>
> – Ken Von Holtz,
> General Manager,
> Texas Corral

Work Schedule App Designed for the Digital Native

As with the implementation of anything new, the HotSchedules rollout at Texas Corral was adopted initially met with some resistance.

"They would ask, 'Why are you changing what we've always done?'" Von Holtz recalls. "Years and years ago, somebody told me, 'If you always do what you've always done, you're always going to get what you've always gotten.' So I talked with the staff and said, 'This is how this program is going to work. It's a benefactor to all of us, from swapping shifts to covering shifts to getting people to pick up your shifts.'"

Von Holtz thinks the restaurant industry demographic ultimately helped make the switch to HotSchedules seamless.

"The majority of this industry is the twenty-something Millennials," he says. "They live and die by their phones. So I said, 'Look, you can download this app, and everything is right there.' Then the majority was jumping right on it."

Now that both front and back of house have adopted the tool, shift swaps take place quickly and effectively.

"It's all in a matter of a minute," Von Holtz says. "Bobby talks to Cindy, they release their shifts and pick them up, and I get the notification on my phone to approve it. Everything's done, and it's changed in the system. It's easy. It's peace of mind."

When Von Holtz thinks back to the schedules and shift swap headaches of the paper based past, he says, "Before, we had Excel spreadsheets and Post-It notes everywhere. Now, everyone gets text messages. It's such a relief and such a blessing that our company decided to go with HotSchedules and get this program on board."

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