



Optimise Your Workforce with Multi-Location Scheduling and Employee Sharing



Overview

A growing number of employers in the retail, food service, and hospitality industries are seeking ways to optimise their available labour pools across locations and departments, particularly during peak seasons when customer traffic is high and at locations where hiring additional staff is challenging. For those with multiple locations in close proximity, sharing employees through multi-location scheduling can help overcome these challenges and provide added benefits.

Sharing employees among locations creates a win-win situation for both these employers and their employees. Businesses can leverage and make best use of their current staff, including filling gaps in coverage. Employees can pick up additional shifts at nearby locations to work extra hours if they wish, and they can swap shifts with employees at other locations for additional schedule flexibility.

The benefits of flexible schedules are well documented, including greater employee autonomy that results in better work-life balance, improved mental and physical health, increased productivity, and greater employee engagement and retention.¹



Varying perspectives on scheduling autonomy

Although schedule flexibility is important to employees and can create a more positive employee experience, 80% of retail and food service workers say they have little to no input into their schedules.² This lack of scheduling input was also demonstrated in a UKG® survey report of 300 retail organisations that found that only 14% of these retailers base staff schedules on employee availability and preferences.³

The same survey, however, shows that many retailers are focused on creating a better employee experience, with 40% of survey respondents identifying employee experience and engagement as a priority, and 41% saying they let store employees self-schedule and choose their own shifts.⁴ A growing number of employers are recognising the value and importance of employees being involved in creating their own schedules.

Only 30% of retailers give employees flexibility to work at more than one location.⁵



Advantages of flexible scheduling

Employees desire schedule flexibility more now than ever before, and this is highly desired by frontline staff. A common way for employers to offer additional flexibility is to give employees an opportunity to pick up open shifts or swap shifts. These policies enable employees to increase their hours beyond their typical hours and to adjust their schedules to meet the demands of life away from work. This flexibility is enhanced when an organisation has multiple locations within a 10-to-15-mile radius and employees can pick up open shifts and swap shifts at locations other than their “home” location.

For companies in the retail, food service, or hospitality business that have multiple locations within a small geographic area, multi-location scheduling and employee sharing helps them, too, by increasing their available labour pool to support fluctuating labour demands. Employee sharing also increases the number of employees available for difficult-to-fill shifts and for locations with lower staff numbers.

Not all companies in these industries, however, have yet recognised the benefits of multi-location scheduling or instituted an employee-sharing approach to scheduling.



Evaluating employee sharing for your organization

How can you determine whether employee sharing is a good fit for your operation? This approach to scheduling can be advantageous if you:

- Operate multiple locations in close proximity that could benefit from shared labour pools
- Experience hiring challenges in specific locations where employee sharing would be beneficial
- Employ a large number of part-time staff who want an opportunity to pick up additional hours
- Value employee engagement and enhancing engagement through schedule flexibility

Case study: How Aimbridge Hospitality is using UKG technology to optimise its workforce

In its efforts to staff back up following the pandemic, Aimbridge Hospitality – with brands such as Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt, and Holiday Inn – considered how to “gigify” its workforce and support employee sharing, a distinct change from the company’s previous approach to scheduling.

“It’s kind of the Uber model that a lot of retailers and service-style employers are trying to come to terms with,” said Conrad Riddle, Vice President of HR Shared Services at Ambridge Hospitality in an interview with Human Resources Executive, which named him one of its five HR’s Rising Stars for 2023.

“How do we meet the employee where they’re at?” he asked. “Rather than the classic model of saying, ‘You need to have a set availability and show up at X time and work on our terms,’ we’re turning those tables around.”

Understanding that employee expectations had changed and schedule flexibility was important, Aimbridge modified its approach to scheduling in order to more effectively utilise its labour pool and enhance the employee experience. Riddle and his HR team have leveraged the UKG Pro Workforce Management solution to improve scheduling and labour forecasting, including developing a “Shift Marketplace,” which enables employees to pick up extra shifts at any Aimbridge property in the area.

“They can’t commit to that 40-hour-a-week schedule anymore,” Riddle said. “So, rather than having them quit, why not convert them into this contingent labor employee? And say, ‘You have to pick up a certain number of shifts a quarter to stay on the rolls but, if you do, you just have to open your app, see the shifts available in your area and then do the job you’re already trained to do.’”

The result of Aimbridge’s move to flexible scheduling and employee sharing has been better employee retention, a decrease in overtime expenditures, and a reduced reliance on third-party labor.⁶



Employee-sharing strategies

If you determine that your organisation could benefit from employee sharing and is ready to enable employees to work at multiple locations, what is your scheduling strategy? Will you schedule across all locations when you initially generate a schedule, or will you generate a schedule for only the home location and let employees pick up open shifts at other locations when shifts become available? There are benefits to each method, and the employee self-service tools in the TimeEscape scheduling solution can be used with either approach.



Multiple-location scheduling considerations

The advantages of scheduling across multiple locations at the time of schedule creation include having a large shared labour pool from the outset. This also may allow for different location management strategies, including cross-location hiring strategies for full-time employees. Configuration controls within the solution prevent split shifts across locations within the same schedule day, so employees don't need to worry about traveling to work at multiple locations on the same day.

Potential topics to consider are whether your organisation is comfortable requiring new employees to work across locations from their time of hire and whether to include this requirement in your hiring terms. Bargaining agreements, contracts, and requirements in specific markets are other items to weigh when utilising direct schedule generation with cross-location sharing of employees.

Managers also may want to stay directly involved with the initial schedule creation for their location, or they may have preferences about when and how individual employees are leveraged in the schedule.

Labour planning can improve with a view of total headcount needed and total headcount available across all locations when schedules are created, enabling better alignment of staff across the network of locations from the start.

Primary-location scheduling considerations

When employees are initially scheduled only at their primary or home location, headcount planning remains at the location level and not at the location network level. Employees can use self-service tools in the scheduling solution to pick up open shifts and swap shifts at other nearby locations at designated times, just as they can if they are scheduled at multiple locations at the start of scheduling.

Policies to evaluate when choosing to institute a primary-location approach to multi-location scheduling include the timing of when open shifts become available, and whether you are re-forecasting labour or adding more open shifts closer to the schedule date. You also may wish to restrict specific jobs from the open-shift pickup windows and determine when employees may begin to swap shifts.

With this primary-location approach to multi-location scheduling and employee sharing, configuration controls also prevent the scheduling of split shifts across locations within the same schedule day.

Example: Multi-location scheduling and employee-sharing process

Three week scheduling process

Companies in the retail, food service, or hospitality business may choose to generate a schedule for team members at their primary work location two to three weeks before a schedule week and post the schedule. Any shifts that remain open that could not be assigned, or any shifts that are needed because of increased labour demand identified within two weeks of the schedule week, may be offered to employees through the employee self-service open-shift pickup windows in TimeEscape. As the schedule week approaches, visibility into open shifts expands to include nearby locations within a zone or area.

This weekly process illustrates how the open-shift pickup windows can be expanded to gradually include more locations as the schedule week draws closer.

Two Weeks Prior	One Week Prior	Schedule Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial volume/labour forecasts are generated Initial schedules are created and initial open shifts are posted Employee self-service windows open: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee open-shift pickup opens for primary job only Employee swap is available across all available jobs/locations Employee request to cover is available across all available jobs/locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forecast week updates occur Open shifts are created based on updated additional demand Employee self-service windows open: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee open-shift pickup opens for primary location only, with a wider scope than two weeks out Employee shift swap is available across all available jobs/locations Employee request to cover is available across all available jobs/locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee self-service windows open: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee open-shift pickup opens for all available locations and jobs, with the widest scope to date Employee shift swap is available across all available jobs/locations Employee request to cover is available across all available jobs/locations

Other employee-sharing considerations

When creating an employee-sharing strategy, you should determine whether employee sharing will be part of your hiring strategy and how you will communicate this requirement to new hires. If your approach is home-location based, the location manager or administrator may need expanded solution access to manage employee profile criteria and job transfer sets. Also, additional employee acknowledgments or signoffs may need to be administered, and impacts to attendance processes and internal policies should be considered.

With a centrally managed approach to employee sharing, policies should be created relative to how initial employee assignments are generated and whether additional employee acknowledgment will be required at time of hire. Consider developing a change management plan on how to include location managers in the development of your centralised strategy.

As you develop your location-grouping strategies, you also should consider their HR and compliance implications. One topic to explore is schedule compliance legislation, including predictive scheduling and Fair Work week legislation among others. Other items to consider include requirements about minimum wages, meal and rest breaks.





Leveraging UKG technology in multi-location scheduling

Using the scheduling tools in TimeEscape, companies in the retail, food service, or hospitality business can more effectively share employees across multiple locations in close proximity. A combination of scheduling contexts, creative schedule generation strategies (if a retailer is generating schedules and not manually creating them), employee open-shift request windows, and expanded employee job transfer functionality in the solution support multi-location scheduling and employee sharing.

Scheduling context definitions configured in the solution prioritise the locations at which employees can first pick up shifts, when they are using self-service tools to request open shifts. Within the selected schedule strategies in TimeEscape, these definitions prioritise which locations are scheduled first, such as at an employee's home location two weeks prior to the schedule week, followed by available shifts at other locations after this. Single-location control enables schedule generation without the risk of splitting shifts within the same day or total shift length across locations that aren't within a reasonable distance of one another.

Companies don't need to leverage schedule generators for multi-location scheduling but can manually build each shift and add open shifts to the schedule planner. Shift templates and patterns also can be assigned to employees to aid the manual creation of schedules.

Using self-service tools, employees can request open shifts and swap shifts, whether the schedule is created manually or a company is using advanced scheduling tools with forecasted labour-based scheduling functionality to optimise use of the labour pool.

With TimeEscape's scheduled job transfer functionality, each location accurately captures an employee's hours worked at that location. To correctly apply bonuses, adjustment rules, break rules, work rule definitions, and overtime requirements in the solution.

The TimeEscape scheduling solution enables companies in the retail, food service, or hospitality business to make the fullest use of their available labour pool through multi-location scheduling and employee sharing, and gives employees the opportunity to work additional hours if they wish, as well as the flexibility to better manage their own schedules for greater work-life balance. The result is increased employee engagement that improves retention and helps organisations more completely utilise their workforce.

About PayEscape

The future of Payroll, Human Resources, and Time Management

Payescape is one of the UK's fastest growing Human Capital Management Providers specialising in outsourced Payroll, HR and Time Management solutions. Our cloud-based technology coupled with world-class customer service is revolutionising how businesses today manage their employees.

We remove the administrative burden from your workload and deliver simple, effective, and reliable Payroll and People Management solutions to support your business now and for the future.



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