



Case Study



Craving Success



Established in 2007, CRAVE Hospitality is committed to providing a wide-range of the freshest menu offerings with exceptional service in a vibrant atmosphere. Guests at CRAVE enjoy locally-sourced, diverse food options and a high-energy, modern and welcoming environment. With 500 employees across six locations, and expansion into new concepts, such as Sopranos Italian Grill, it's clear that guests are finding the "CRAVE Experience" worth repeating.

When Jim Hofer, Director of Training and Service Excellence, arrived on the CRAVE scene several months ago, he immediately went to work to see how CRAVE could streamline their processes to ensure that managers and staff could maximize the time focused on guests. Right away, he identified an area for improvement.

"We needed a fresh approach to our scheduling and communications activities. People had accepted that a manual solution was working just fine, but we set out to find efficiencies and systems that could put our managers in front of those that matter most; our guests and staff," Jim commented.

Jim began researching solutions for online scheduling, labor cost control and employee communications. Though he used HotSchedules at his previous two employers and was a big fan of the solution, he wanted to do some due diligence research to ensure he was recommending the very best option available on the market. He considered several alternatives before deciding that the best-in-class option was still the HotSchedules solution he already knew.

"I looked at several other options because I wanted to be able to show a clear return on investment in whichever solution I recommended. HotSchedules was the solution I felt would deliver a definitive impact to our bottom line right away."

Quotes

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"All in all we've seen an overall labor cost reduction of 1.5% through the awareness of overtime scheduling, punctuality controls and understanding the flow-through of guests and sales."

"The HotSchedules support team is always incredibly helpful. Anytime I call, they respond. I really can't say enough great things. Their response time and follow-through are among the reasons why I like HotSchedules so much."

**Jim Hofer,
Director of Training and
Service Excellence,
CRAVE Hospitality**

With his research behind him, Jim set out to get the HotSchedules solution rolled out as quickly as possible. HotSchedules' dedicated training and implementation team offers centralized or web-based training to ensure that all systems are working properly and users are comfortable working with the software. "We wanted to get moving fast, and HotSchedules helped us make that happen," Jim said. The installs occurred in quick succession over a period of a few weeks. Integration with CRAVE'S Aloha POS system was effortless.

"The HotSchedules training process and materials were very helpful; with the proliferation of computers our teams picked up on HotSchedules very quickly. It's user-friendly and intuitive, and can be easily taught and utilized."

Scheduling in a Snap

With the managers trained and ready to go, use of the HotSchedules solution began company-wide. Initial reaction to the announcement was mixed – some managers were comfortable with the old way of doing things, and were suspicious and a little nervous about a more technologically advanced solution.

Those doubts and concerns were quickly put to rest. As soon as managers began using the HotSchedules solution, they immediately noticed the improvement in time to create their schedules. "Before the HotSchedules solution, it was taking managers 3-4 hours to create schedules. Now, we're seeing about a 75% decrease in time to generate schedules – to an hour or less," says Jim.

That time savings can be put to good use. With schedules taking such a small window of time, managers can move on to other tasks. They can complete their schedules online, from anywhere, including the comfort of their homes. When they come into the store, they come in ready to work and focus on guests.

Such ubiquitous access affects the staff members in a positive way as well. Anyone with a HotSchedules account has innumerable ways to check their schedule and make requests or changes. They can go online with either a computer or smart phone, or they can call the 24x7 automated, bi-lingual system to get the information they need.

"The different login options are among the best selling points for us, and especially our COO. There are so many ways you can access the system, anytime, anywhere. You don't have to come into the store at an inconvenient time to fill out the request-off form. That's a real, tangible benefit to the staff. They all use their text alerts and email to get their schedule."

Employees who are more empowered to influence their daily schedule tend to be happier and more likely to stick around. Studies indicate that key influencers to employee loyalty are work-life balance and flexible work options. "When we rolled this out to our Sopranos restaurant, our staff thanked us for having such a great program in place," Jim said.

Scheduler - You are currently in the SERVER schedule

Legend: Show/Hide Legend | Locations: Verify | In Times: Verify | Keyboard: Show/Hide

Time: 29:36

	Wed May 18	Thu May 19	Fri May 20	Sat May 21	Sun May 22	Mon May 23	Tue May 24
ALLIE SAMUELS	AM [1] 3:30						11:30am-3:00pm SERV [05]
	PH [3] 19:00	5:00pm-10:00pm SERV [04]		4:00pm-11:00pm SERV [02]	4:00pm-11:00pm SERV [02]		
BECCA JENKINS	AM [3] 11:30	11:30am-3:00pm SERV [04]	11:30am-3:00pm SERV [01]	11:30am-4:00pm SERV [04]			
	PH [2] 13:00			4:00pm-12:00am SERV [01]		5:00pm-10:00pm SERV [04]	
BEN PERKINS	AM [2] 8:30			11:30am-4:00pm SERV [05]		11:30am-3:00pm SERV [02]	
	PH [6] 30:30	4:00pm-11:00pm SERV [02]	5:30pm-10:00pm SERV [05]	5:30pm-10:00pm SERV [07]		5:30pm-10:00pm SERV [07]	5:00pm-10:00pm SERV [04]
BOBBY REYNOLDS	AM [0] 0:00						
	PH [4] 19:00	5:30pm-10:00pm SERV [06]	5:30pm-10:00pm SERV [08]	5:00pm-10:00pm SERV [04]			5:00pm-10:00pm SERV [05]
BRANDON WILLIAMS	AM [2] 9:30		10:00am-4:00pm SERV [01]			11:30am-3:00pm SERV [04]	
	PH [2] 12:30		5:30pm-10:00pm SERV [06]				4:00pm-12:00am SERV [04]
BRENDA ROLSTON	AM [2] 7:00		11:30am-3:00pm SERV [04]	11:30am-3:00pm SERV [04]			
	PH [1] 8:00					4:00pm-12:00am SERV [01]	
BRETT TIMMONS	AM [0] 0:00						
	PH [1] 8:00		4:00pm-12:00am SERV [01]				
BRIAN CAMDEN	AM [0] 0:00						
	PH [3] 17:30			5:30pm-10:00pm SERV [08]	4:00pm-12:00am SERV [01]	5:00pm-10:00pm SERV [03]	

Managing Labor Costs

In addition to time savings, the HotSchedules reporting functions have helped save on labor costs as well. From labor proforma reports to forecasting to overtime warning reports, HotSchedules arms it's users with robust information to help them reduce controllable labor costs, both day to day and year over year.

“All in all we've seen an overall labor cost reduction of 1.5% through the awareness of overtime scheduling, punctuality controls and understanding the flow-through of guests and sales,” Jim said.

As heavy users of the labor proforma and corporate-level reporting options, CRAVE is able to see where some restaurants are achieving successes that can be applied across their other locations. “We use HotSchedules to compare how certain restaurants are accomplishing sales per labor hour efficiencies and, then we copy those best practices to other locations,” Jim noted.

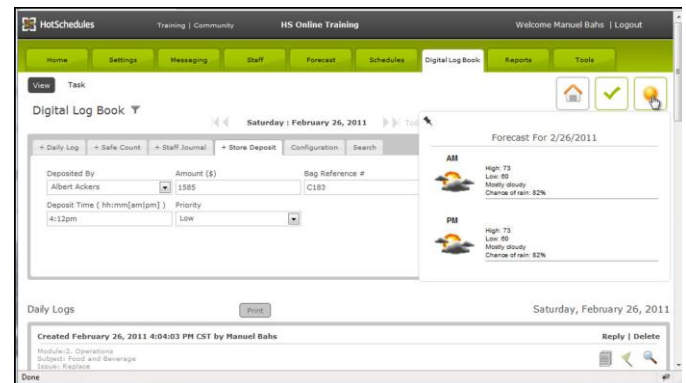
Jim went on to say, “For sure HotSchedules has helped us reduce overtime scheduling – I'd guess by 100%. We haven't drilled down into the specific numbers at CRAVE yet, but in my previous experience, we had about 30 to 50 hours a week in overtime before HotSchedules. After adopting HotSchedules and increasing visibility into where and how overtime was happening, it went down in all our locations, and one of our restaurants was able to go down to zero overtime for seven months.”

Raising the Communications Bar

Another invaluable tool to the CRAVE team is HotSchedules' Digital Logbook (DLB). The DLB appears as a tab right in the HotSchedules online portal and can be just as easily accessed using any internet-compatible device. Managers no longer have to keep track of hand-written daily logs, which are often difficult to chase down, cumbersome to store and next to impossible to search. The DLB allows all managers to comment on day-to-day highlights, lowlights and general information in a date-bound, searchable, readily available format.

Jim observed, “HotSchedules' Digital Logbook has changed the game on our managers' communication, delegation and follow-through. Previously, our in-store communications consisted of clipboards full of notes with no dates. The Manager's Redbook® was being used, but differently by each restaurant. Now, everything is under one umbrella and can be managed consistently and far more accurately. Finding records is a breeze and we can hold each other accountable. There's a cost savings there too.”

The CRAVE team also values HotSchedules as their internal communications portal. They have come to rely on HotSchedules to spread company-wide news, as well as important location-specific messages. “HotSchedules has created a real sense of community among our employees. It's like Facebook for our company. I had worried about it making scheduling and communication impersonal, but in fact our staff and managers now have more time to connect with each other and grow as a team.”



Stellar Support

The HotSchedules solution is backed by its unrivaled service and support team. Live calls are taken 7 days a week in both English and Spanish, and the automated phone system can be accessed 24x7. HotSchedules also utilizes the GetSatisfaction online user forum for feedback and questions.

A HotSchedules dedicated account manager is an added benefit to the CRAVE team. The account management team is comprised of highly-experienced project managers who make it their job to know their customers' businesses and to ensure complete client satisfaction.

"The HotSchedules support team is always incredibly helpful. Anytime I call, they respond. I really can't say enough great things. Their response time and follow-through are among the reasons why I like HotSchedules so much," Jim said.

What's more, the GetSatisfaction forum is also used by the HotSchedules development team to field customers' suggestions for improving the tools. Every few weeks, upgrades, enhancements and fixes are pushed out seamlessly to the users. "With HotSchedules, customers are part of the process. We know we can call or write and be heard and the evidence shows up when we log in and see improvements happening," said Jim.

A Partnership for the Future

With CRAVE's plans for growth and expansion, they need solutions and vendor-partners they can rely on to be with them and grow with them.

Jim concluded, "We're a growing company, and HotSchedules continues to show their commitment to supporting us through that growth. They have great employees, executives and managers and when you have incredible vendor-partners like Hotschedules; your company can do whatever you can imagine."

