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5 Ways to Make Workforce Tech Work for You

By Jennifer Goforth Gregory, Contributing Editor | May 06, 2014

It's no mystery that in the hospitality industry, having a reliable staff that provides excellent customer service is essential for success. With payroll and benefits often being one of largest expenses for a hotel or restaurant, operators want to make sure that they are getting a good return on human resource investments. Here are five ways that a workforce management system can help owners and operators make effective staffing decisions while keeping costs under control.

1) Finding the best employee for each position

With high turnover in the industry, managers are constantly looking for qualified employees and several workforce management systems have modules that help identify the best candidate for each position. Evolv ([www.evolv.net](#)) Selection is a cloud-based product that provides unique guidance during the hiring process, going beyond past job experience and using profiles to help determine if a candidate will be a good fit for the position. For example, a reservationist at a large hotel chain needs to have certain soft skills and personality characteristics to effectively provide excellent service and handle dissatisfied customers.

2) Calculating people per shift and position

If too many employees are working at a given time, then money is wasted, but if there is not enough staff to handle the volume, then customer service suffers. Dave and Busters ([www.daveandbusters.com](#)) uses Workforce Management System (WMx) by Agilysys ([www.agilysys.com](#)) to forecast how many employees it needs at each station in the kitchen of each restaurant located in their entertainment centers.

"We selected WMx because of their excellent forecasting abilities based on metrics such as how many plates will be going out of the kitchen each hour," says Jeff Weiss, director of store systems in the information technology department at Dave & Busters. Agilysys, along with other vendors including Micros ([www.micros.com](#)) and Oracle ([www.oracle.com](#)), will also be updating its product in the near future to allow additional forecasting based on how the Affordable Care Act will affect the benefits and costs for each employee based on hours worked.

3) Keeping tabs on data and hours

Since the Mammoth Mountain Ski Area ([www.mammothmountain.com](#)) began using Kronos ([www.kronos.com](#)) for workforce management at its hotel properties and one of the onsite restaurants, managers have created more than 230 custom reports to provide the individualized information needed to efficiently run each department. "Our managers love the ad hoc reporting capabilities of Kronos. The custom reporting feature allows them to create a report on any aspect of their employees' data," says Stacey Crockett of Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, located in Mammoth Lakes, CA. "We are very cost conscious at the resort and keeping tabs on overtime costs is essential. The overtime report allows managers to see who is approaching overtime based on hours worked and make adjustments accordingly."

4) Adding mobility to manage schedules and shifts

Another common problem is employees managing schedules and swapping shifts, but the mobile option offered by many vendors solves this problem and prevents communication mistakes that can lead to a shift without proper coverage. Curtis Lyons has not posted a paper schedule since he began using HotSchedules ([www.hotschedules.com](#)) almost four years ago at his two restaurants, Roger Brown's Restaurant & Sports Bar ([www.rogerbrowns.com](#)) and The Cove Tavern in Portsmouth, Virginia.

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"Instead of keeping a redbook at the hostess stand, the schedule goes directly to each staff member's smart phone or mobile device. They can swap shifts or pick up new shifts using the mobile capabilities. Employees who don't have a smart phone can get their schedule by calling a number," says Lyons. The Hot Schedules solution is part of the Red Book Connect family and is accessible to Lyons via a monthly fee, which Lyons says is more attractive than having to purchase licensed software.

It used to be that managers had to be onsite to check on performance and make sure that all goals were being met. But most workforce management products offer the ability for managers to log into the system remotely to see the performance of the restaurant or hotel in real-time at a very granular level. Aldelo (www.aldelo.com) offers a back-office cloud module for its products that allow managers to have the same access that they would at the restaurant and make modifications to staffing on the fly no matter where they are.

5) Reducing software maintenance and administration time

Since each new vendor and system added to a vendor increases the cost, maintenance time, and learning curve, integration with existing products is essential for many owner-operators. Many customers select Micros because of the seamless integration with its POS system, which allows managers to use one device and app to see all data regarding the restaurant or hotel. Micros also integrates with its time reporting systems which allows real-time forecasting of costs and overtime.

Oracle, too, has the ability to integrate with a variety of other products, including business systems and POS systems. Oracle offers solutions customized for large global hotels down to mom and pop motels with one location. A global company, Oracle is able to handle issues surrounding currency, language and country specific employment rules that global operators encounter.

Having the IT expertise on staff as well as incurring the costs required for maintaining a system can be concern for many owners and operators. One of the reasons that Mammoth Ski Area went with Kronos was the cloud-based capabilities. "We save on IT costs because we don't have to do upgrades each time an update is released along with installing and testing. Our server costs are reduced as well," says Crockett.

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