OPTIMIZING EMPLOYEE SHIFT SCHEDULES

There are many 24/7 operations across North America. Far too often, shift schedulers, shift workers, and management tirelessly put up with shift schedules that lead to employee frustration, production problems, poor morale, health and safety concerns, worker fatigue, absenteeism, high turnover, and high training costs due to poor employee retention.

Do your shift schedules date back to the 20th Century? Have they survived (poorly) the test of time even though better schedules exist? Lately, has anyone in the organizations looked at other scheduling designs that may better meet management and employee needs without such high risks and costs to your workers and your organization.

Everyone Wins Shift Designs and Employee Scheduling

Hatrak Associates has the experience to help public and private sector organizations select, design, and implement shift schedule designs that meet the needs of 24/7 operations.

Hatrak Associates approach to help organizations solve their shift scheduling problems by working with an organizations employees, labor unions, and management. Hatrak Associates facilitates the work of a development group that includes representatives from each part of the organization mentioned in the previous sentence. The goals of the development group include developing shift and schedule options that: 1) Meet the organizations business needs, 2) Satisfy worker preferred shift and schedule needs, 3) Increase productivity, 4) Reduce and then control overtime costs, 5) Increase average annual employee deployable days, and 6) improve and promote the organization’s health and safety objectives.

When Your Shift Workers Benefit the Organization’s “Bottom Line” Also Benefits

Increased productivity and efficiency, increased average annual employee deployable days, increases in morale and improvements in the work environment and climate for the workers (health, safety and alertness) are benefits you can expect when the right shift design and employee scheduling solutions are implemented.

Typically, employees see an improved quality of work and home life, easier adaptation to night shift transitions, reduced fatigue, and more time off. Hatrak Associates shift design and employee scheduling optimization facilitation process will assist in your effort to improve each.
Hatrak Associates Shift Schedule Optimization Process

As is the case with all serious endeavors such as this there are good and bad ways to change shift schedules. The worst way is for management to select and mandate a new schedule with limited employee involvement.

Similarly, benchmarking approaches often fail to achieve consensus, and frequently overlook critical issues that arise from implementing the schedule change...creating costly oversights and negative employee reactions.

Changing schedules is not simply a matter of researching some alternatives to vote on. The reality is that a schedule change is a highly complex and volatile issue that can easily become divisive and counterproductive if not developed properly.

Many companies look for a perfect schedule, not realizing that one does not exist. In fact, the best schedule for any group of shift workers is a site-specific phenomenon, derived from management and employee criteria. Thus, the scheduling “answer” is less important then the process by which it is derived.

Successfully Select and Implement Schedules

Each organization and each group of shift workers is unique. Finding the "best" or optimal shift schedule follows a thorough, logical and systematic search. The scheduling solution must meet the needs for the greatest proportion of the workforce at each location. Also important is that the solutions must assure that the right employees are available at the right place, in the right numbers, and at the right time.

Hatrak Associates has been helping organizations avoid the negative consequences of poor selections and the benefits of selecting “Everyone Wins” solutions. Hatrak Associates’ strategies involve using management, employees and labor representatives in a tightly structured participatory selection process.

The Shift Schedule Optimization Process includes:

- **Defining operational criteria:** Management, process teams and key employee help define operational criteria
- **Maximizing employee input:** Individual and group interviews and PowerPoint presentations help maximize employee input and involvement.
- **Identifying employee lifestyle issues:** Issues such as day care needs surface through confidential surveys.
- **Providing scheduling education:** Educating employees prepares then to make informed choices about a change that will affect both their home and work life.
- **Focusing on innovative and effective schedule design:** Schedule properties are explored, management's needs defined and quantified, and employee preferences are considered here.
- **Identifying all scheduling options and determining the best alternative solution:** Current schedules are used to measure all alternatives against.
• **Address all implementation issues:** Issues such as overtime, holiday pay, relief coverage, budget, and increasing employee deployable days are explored.

• **Training shift workers:** The training program includes all the need to know information employees will need to understand the schedule and to maximize the benefits available to them.

Contact Bob Hatrak, JDSA, 9044 Thornbury Lane, Las Vegas, Nevada 89134-6169

Phone: 702-869-8900  Fax: 702-869-8921  Email: jdsa@hatrak.com