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Retailers' Guide for Optimizing Labor Using Workforce Management Software

Essentials for Getting the Most out of Your Next-Gen Workforce

Become an Employer of Choice with Intelligent Workforce Solutions

Your workers are at the very core of your store operations. Every customer interaction depends upon them. But ensuring high levels of engagement and retention for this next generation of employees isn't easy. Today's workers expect more than they have in the past. They demand a greater work-life balance and more say in how they contribute to day-to-day operations.

Without the right workforce technology, that can pose a problem for store managers, especially when they use manual scheduling practices to create labor schedules.

Inflexible methods of scheduling also create complexity for store managers. Their days are interrupted when unexpected events occur, and they're forced to scramble to fill gaps and cover shifts.

Labor compliance is just as difficult to manage with ever-evolving labor laws, regulations, union rules and internal policies. This can drive up already escalating labor costs that diminish razor thin margins.

Given such pressures, how can you ensure compliance and stand out as the employer of choice? The answer lies in intelligent workforce management solutions that address retail's top labor challenges, from employee engagement to labor compliance and costs. Read through our list of must-haves proven to optimize labor spend and uplift associates and store managers.
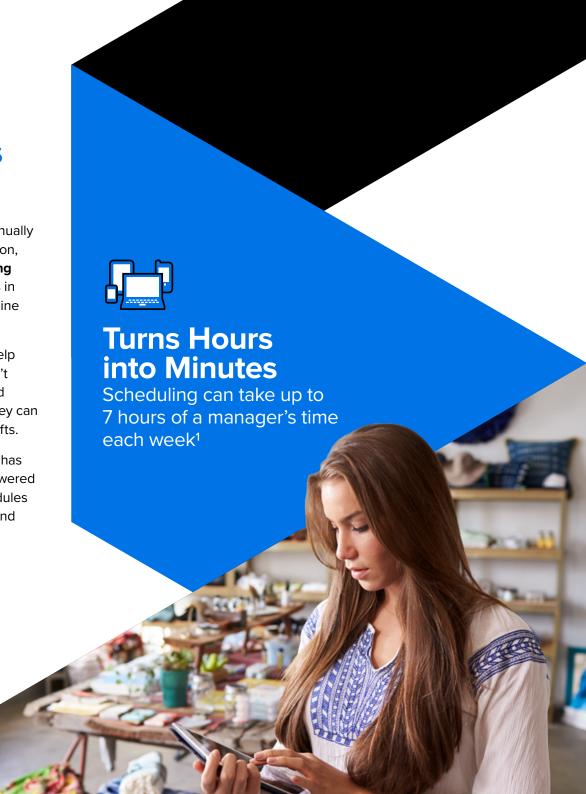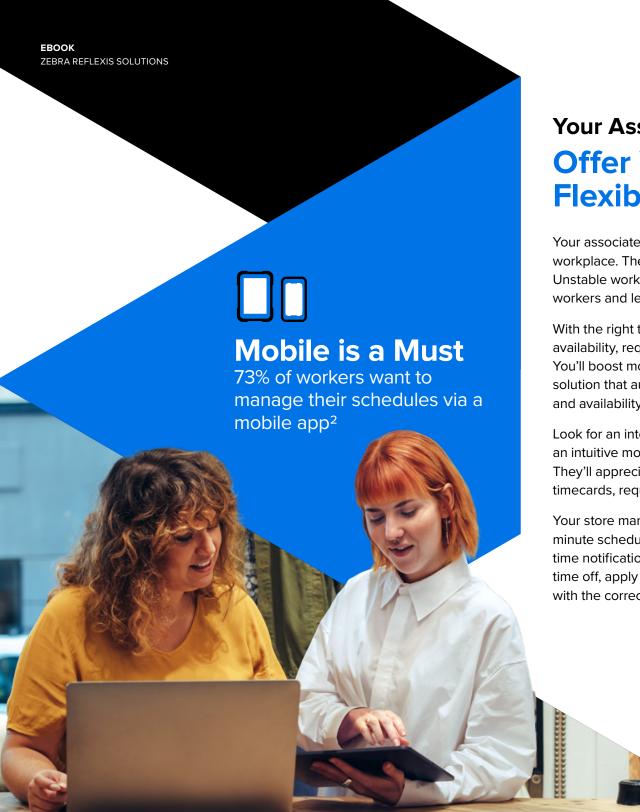
Your Managers

Keep Managers on the Sales Floor and out of the Office

Every week, your managers may be losing valuable hours working manually creating and continuously editing schedules. When looking for a solution, consider technology that helps **speed up the process,** while **eliminating inefficiencies**. An AI-powered solution generates optimized schedules in a matter of minutes, freeing up hours for store managers to train front-line associates and interact with customers.

Investing in an agile workforce management solution can be a huge help when dealing with the volatility of the retail market. When workers don't show up, customer traffic changes at a moment's notice or unexpected events impact schedules, store managers can respond in real time. They can tap into pooled resources from multiple stores and broadcast open shifts.

Your smart workforce management solution should ensure each store has the right people scheduled at the right time. Ask if it comes with AI-powered forecasting. This will allow store managers to automatically align schedules with total on-site workload, budget and labor spend, customer traffic and weather and local events, as well as service targets.

Turns Hours into Minutes
Scheduling can take up to 7 hours of a manager's time each week[1]

Mobile is a Must

73% of workers want to manage their schedules via a mobile app[2]

Your Associates

Offer Workers More Flexible Schedules

Your associates have a lot going on — both inside and outside of the workplace. They have school, second jobs and caretaker responsibilities. Unstable work levels and unexpected schedule changes can frustrate workers and lead to lower engagement and higher turnover rates.

With the right technology, though, associates can easily adjust their availability, request time off, set work locations and pick up or swap shifts. You'll boost morale and retention rates, while minimizing errors with a solution that automatically accounts for workers' preferences and availability.

Look for an intelligent workforce management solution that delivers an intuitive mobile user interface — a must for these digital natives. They'll appreciate the fast access to their weekly or monthly schedules, timecards, requests and approvals.

Your store managers will appreciate how adaptable it makes them to last-minute schedule changes. Using a smart solution, they can receive real-time notifications of workers' sick leave requests, quickly approve or deny time off, apply geofencing restrictions and search for available associates with the correct skills to fill schedule gaps.

Operations and Compliance

Stay Compliant and Lower Labor Costs

Labor laws, union rules and store-to-store policies are complex and constantly changing. This is where an intelligent workforce management solution can make the difference between big fines and big savings. Make sure your solution offers highly configurable labor models designed to automatically adjust schedules with these ever-changing regulations. Ask if it includes timely alerts, so you can proactively avoid pricey violations and unnecessary overtime.

Tracking compliance with internal policies can also be tricky without real-time visibility and actionable notifications. Time and attendance solutions help identify noncompliance issues in real time, giving management the ability to proactively respond to impending violations to avoid fines and penalties.

Don't overlook the power of forecasting. A system that can more accurately predict factors impacting sales and customer demands can eliminate unnecessary labor spend. Ensure your solution comes with advanced algorithms that automatically account for variables at play, such as store type, size, departments, workers' roles and regulatory laws, so you can better account for true labor needs down to 15-minute increments.

Consolidating labor across a specified region is another smart way to lower turnover and therefore labor costs. Instead of losing your top performing associates at the end of peak seasons, entice them to stay on even when the demand dips. Allow them to make up for lost hours by working at multiple stores. It's possible with an intelligent solution that automatically pools labor and matches schedules to employee location preferences, availability and skill set.

Meet Workers Where They Are
Meet Zebra Reflexis

Now that you've got your list of must-haves for your search, where do you begin? Start with the leading provider of AI-powered workforce solutions, Zebra Reflexis. Intelligent workforce management solutions empower your employees, while elevating your customer experience. Zebra Reflexis removes complexity from your labor operations, significantly controlling costs, boosting employee engagement and maximizing profitability — all with one, cloud-based platform.

Workforce Scheduler™
Optimize labor budgeting, forecasting and scheduling with AI-powered workforce management.

Employee Self-Service™
Engage front-line associates in the scheduling process with robust, mobile self-service.

Time & Attendance™
Ensure compliance with labor rules and time keeping with real-time data and insights.

Sources:
1. "Retailers Need for Speed: Unlocking Value in Omnichannel Delivery." McKinsey & Co., Sept. 8, 2021
2. 2021 Zebra Shopper Study, Vol. 1

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