

Strategic Communication: How To Unlock Hourly Employee Engagement

A Guide to Better Hourly Employee Engagement Through Scheduling Communication



Scheduling Is a Strategic Process

Driven by global competition, now more than ever, organizations are dependent on engaging healthy relationships across all levels of their business to align their workforce to a common goal. While most employee engagement and communication strategies are focused on salaried employees, we believe these same initiatives, when applied to hourly workers, can produce the same dramatic benefits seen by their salaried counterparts.

For hourly employees, the work schedule is at the center of their daily lives. Work schedules determine paychecks, vacation time, day-care planning, sleep schedules, transportation, teammates, job responsibilities and much more. Naturally, this means the schedule is a point of stress for most managers, schedulers and hourly employees.

Scheduling communication is the key to unlocking the many benefits of employee engagement for hourly employees. This guide shows that when scheduling activities are properly communicated, hourly employees feel less stressed, involved and committed to their work. Improving schedule communication can lead to better engagement, increased productivity, lower absenteeism, lower turnover and ultimately higher profits.

Consistent communication, whether it occurs in person, over the phone or electronically, is connected to **higher engagement**.

-GALLUP

Our goal is to help organizations take realistic steps towards engaging their hourly employees by providing insights and best practices for improving communication efforts about the schedule.

Companies with good employee engagement are **21% more** profitable than companies with poor engagement

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This guide offers insights into the following:

- The value of an engaged workforce
- Key areas to concentrate on
- communicating about the employee schedule



The Value of an Engaged Workforce

Before we focus on optimizing communications about the schedule, we must first tackle why employee engagement is critical to employers. According to Gallup, improving employee engagement strongly impacts the overall well-being of the business. Improved employee engagement was found to have the following effects:

- 17% higher productivity
- 21% higher profitability
- 10% higher customer satisfaction
- 41% lower absenteeism
- 24% less turnover (in high-turnover organizations)
- 59% less turnover (in low-turnover organizations)
- 70% fewer safety incidents
- 40% fewer defects/quality issues

Similar results can be observed for hourly employees when employers focus their efforts on improving the communication between their schedulers and their staff. When hourly employees can engage in the scheduling process, job satisfaction is higher and, more importantly, less likely to actively disengage from the organization. Active disengagement decreases productivity, weakens revenue, and negatively impacts your existing labor force.

As leaders have tried to adjust to a rapidly evolving global reality, the average employee across the globe is left with a great deal of fear and anxiety that threatens their full engagement at work.

-KEN OEHLER, AON HEWITT'S GLOBAL CULTURE & ENGAGEMENT

THE CHALLENGE OF DISENGAGEMENT

On a global scale, current employers are currently facing a cocktail of challenges. In an environment characterized by political unrest, social change and technological evolution, employees are feeling anxious about the present and future direction of the working world.

Workforce Productivity



WORK FORCE PRODUCTIVITY

With questions about market conditions, job automation, and career opportunities still unanswered, employees are hesitant to engage with employers fully.

- Nearly 70% of all U.S. workers don't like their job.
- 12.8 million US hourly workers age 16 or older are actively disengaged.
- Actively disengaged employees cost the U.S. \$483 billion to \$605 billion each year in lost productivity.
- Global engagement is trending downward (2015: 65%, 2016: 63%).

THE COST OF AN ACTIVE DISENGAGEMENT

Statistics are nice, but they lack the punch most companies need to act. Using averages calculated by multiple research organizations, we can make an educated guess on the amount that disengagement is costing your business.

- Gallup found that on average, actively disengaged employees cost an organization 34% of their salary in lost productivity.
- Gallup also found that on average 16% of the workforce is actively disengaged.

Simply fill out the form below to reveal how much money you may be wasting through disengagement every year.

1. # of workers x 16% = \$ disengaged workers

2. average hourly wage x avg hours per week x 52 weeks x 34% = \$ average cost of disengaged worker

3. disengaged workers x average cost of disengaged worker = \$ total disengagement cost

When hourly workers are disengaged, they become costly and unproductive. Actively disengaged employees tend to exert the minimum effort required to maintain a steady paycheck. They are quick to display negative sentiments about the business, may negatively influence other employees and may ultimately slash profits

More and more, companies realize that it's not enough to hire good workers. They must keep employees engaged or risk consequence of turning good employees into disengaged workers. While the consequences of disengagement are daunting, employers can breathe a great sigh of relief as schedule communication is here to help. In the following sections, we will cover the proven steps employers can take around schedule communications to both encourage employee engagement and re-engage those who are actively disengaged.

Components of Good Schedule Communication

In our experience, when employers promote good communication around their scheduling activities, they improve hourly employee engagement while also mitigating the risk of future disengagement. The challenge is figuring out which scheduling activities stand to benefit the most from improved communication. To strengthen your schedule communications strategy, we suggest improving communication efforts in the following areas

Schedule Awareness

Employees are attracted to organizations where their schedules are known, easily accessible and communicated regularly. The way organizations disseminate scheduling details to their hourly employees can both boost engagement and create a competitive differentiator amongst the hourly labor pool.

Process Awareness

Communicating corporate scheduling practices ensures that employees are aware of the processes in place to help them control their working hours. Schedule communications can tell employees how to request time-off, change a shift, call in sick and handle other schedule management tasks.

Schedule Construction

Most employees want a healthy work-life balance. Good schedule communication can assist both schedulers and employees by helping them share schedule preferences like availability, vacation time, shift trades and any unexpected changes. Clear communication between schedulers and the workforce facilitates a more accurate schedule.

Workforce Communication Tools

The best communication tool is one that gets used. Considerations like age, gender, cultural backgrounds, work habits, and worksite location may help you understand your workforce and align your communication methods to their preferences. Respecting these preferences often amounts to higher engagement along with higher productivity.

Targeted Communication

Organizations commonly group hourly employees by shift detail, job function, or skill set. Maintaining this segmentation in your schedule communications can allow schedulers to quickly send messages to only relevant staff. Targeting the right workers, at the right times of need leads to more efficient scheduling.

Schedule Alerts

As the schedule evolves, proper communication regarding schedule changes keeps employees up-to-date and engaged with your organization. Commonly used alerts include scheduling reminders, time-clock alerts, team broadcasts, change requests, shift acknowledgments, and workforce notifications.

Informed Employees

Successful businesses frequently grow in new, unexpected directions. Hourly employees feel more engaged when they are kept informed of business advances. Employers can use the communication channels set up for scheduling to notify relevant work groups about new trainings, technological upgrades, business tools, policies, and any other operational changes.

Schedule Communications Best Practices

Maintaining high levels of employee engagement with the typical turnover rates typically associated with hourly labor is no easy task. However, following our best practices for schedule communication will not only help increase employee engagement, and better the odds that your employees will stick around. To optimize your communications, we suggest following our best-practice guidelines.

- Make communications accessible.**
Between smartphones, laptops, email and even smartwatches, the range of communication tools modern employees use is vast. Use a variety of methods so your workforce can quickly receive important information
- Broadcast essential communication from the top.**
While supervisors and managers can be proactive and open with communication, they also have busy schedules like the rest of us. Avoid missed and mixed messages coming from different supervisors by broadcasting essential communications from senior leadership to all affected workers.
- Avoid excess communication.**
Amongst internal communication professionals, over communication is cited as the top problem. Your workers are not immune to the almost constant flood of information shared every day. Keep your messages relevant, timely and easily understood. Your workers are most effective when you deliver vital information at its time of need.
- It's all about mobile.**
Increasingly, workers live in an always-on environment. Having access to schedules, shift details and availability at a moment's notice is paramount for today's workforce. Anywhere, anytime access increases employee satisfaction by giving workers the flexibility to find information at their leisure.
- Publicized new trainings and resources.**
Schedule communication is a great vehicle for keeping your workforce up to date with new trainings, policies, insurance plans, company events, workshops and a plethora of other employee resources. Promoting opportunities for employees to advance their careers encourages engagement and shows a company-wide commitment to bettering the professional lives of its workforce.
- Keep scheduling communication actionable.**
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Top teams that address engagement needs in their everyday work outperform bottom teams by an average **20%** in sales and **10%** in customer engagement, making it a worthy pursuit.

-GALLUP


□ **Provide avenues for feedback.**
While good communication transfers knowledge, great communication encourages a conversation. Inspire your workforce to become more engaged by opening multiple avenues for feedback. Engaged employees typically generate new ideas, provide feedback and openly express their opinions.

□ **Acknowledge the exceptional.**
Respecting hourly workers helps hire and hold on to top talent. Acknowledging excellence shows workers that they are well respected and valued members of your organization. Senior leadership can take advantage of the communication channels set up for scheduling to show appreciation for the workers on the frontlines.

□ **Maintain open communication.**
An open communication style shrinks the typical barriers between hourly employees and upper management. Open and honest communication throughout the scheduling process and the organization as a whole helps employees engage with one another throughout all levels of the organization.

□ **Measure the impact of schedule communication.**
Mathematician Karl Pearson famously observed, “That which is measured improves. That which is measured and reported improves exponentially.” Good scheduling communication is set up to be measured against realistic goals. Common goals include faster fill rates, reduced no-shows, decreased overtime costs, and reduced tardiness.

□ **Use the right technology.**
As the schedule evolves, proper communication regarding schedule changes keeps employees up-to-date and engaged with your organization. Commonly used alerts include scheduling reminders, time-clock alerts, team broadcasts, change requests, shift acknowledgments, and workforce notifications.



13% of hourly workers indicated that they request time off or shift changes via personal email; **15%** do so via text message, and **6%** do so via a Facebook group. Doing so in these non-secure, personal channels leaves companies without oversight, documentation or control.

– REDEAPP & EDISON RESEARCH

The Role of Technology

Bill Gates put it best when he said, “Information technology and business are becoming inextricably interwoven. I don’t think anybody can talk meaningfully about one without talking about the other.” Technology plays a huge role in how your employees engage with one another. Improving hourly employee engagement through better communication can be amplified by deploying the right employee scheduling software. Shiftboard understands that scheduling is only a part of what it takes to manage an active workforce. We see communication as the necessary sidekick to any scheduling pursuit. When evaluating scheduling software, we suggest considering the following capabilities, which we’ve built into our own solution:

- Platform Flexibility**
Communicating with hourly workers to create a workable schedule is inherently complex. When looking for a scheduling automation platform, the solution needs to mold to your business, not the other way around.
- Automatic Notifications**
Managers and schedulers should not be burdened by communication that can be automated. Informing your workforce of schedule updates, shift alerts, and credential expirations should be set up as automatic communications.
- Targeted Communication**
The most useful message is delivered to the right workers, as close to the moment of need as possible. Targeted shift reminders, schedule adjustments, team notifications and last-minute changes all need to live within your scheduling automation software of choice.
- Announcements**
While most communication is targeted, employers frequently need the ability to broadcast messages across multiple teams or to one shared news source. A good software solution allows managers to make announcements via a variety of methods and mediums.
- Manager Alerts**
Reducing human error is on the to-do list of most organizations. Great schedule communication tools alert managers immediately when a shift is missed, when a critical shift is left unfilled or when an employee is late to clocking in.
- Worker Status**
Scheduling hourly employees requires that the scheduler has up-to-date information on the available workforce. The right scheduling solution should communicate the status of new employees, new certifications, relevant qualifications, general availability, shift limitations and other critical factors that may influence filling the right shift with the right worker.
- Multiple Mediums**
Schedule Communications must be available across numerous types of smart devices. Schedulers should engage workers with the tools they’re comfortable using. Features like SMS alerts, mobile-friendly schedules, mobile time clocks, two-way texting and in-app time-off requests greatly improve employee engagement.

- Self-serve**
Many times, the biggest barrier to communication is poor timing. Workers need an access point to consume important shift information on their own time. Scheduling software that allows managers to see who's on the schedule while giving workers the ability to trade or sign up for shifts frees up the scheduler's time.
- Feedback**
Efficient communication acknowledges when a message has been received. Good scheduling solutions offer various avenues for feedback. Hourly employee feedback includes actions like acknowledging assigned shifts, verifying traded shifts or adding notes to special requests.
- Integrations**
Best-in-class scheduling solutions integrate with several other industry-leading tools. Integrating with iCal, Google Calendar, MS Outlook or other business tools gives workers the ability to consume information the way they want to.

If you're considering a scheduling automation solution with robust communication capabilities, **we'd love to talk**. We've learned a lot from helping organizations across nearly every industry successfully schedule millions of shifts for countless workers. **Let us show you how** scheduling automation can improve your business and engage your workforce today!

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored blazer, smiling warmly. She is in a meeting with other people, whose faces are partially visible in the foreground and background. The setting appears to be a modern office with large windows.

Thank you for reading this guide. We hope you found some helpful insights and best practices to apply to your own employee engagement efforts.

TO FIND OUT HOW SHIFTBOARD'S SCHEDULING SOFTWARE EMPOWERS EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION CHECK OUT OUR **PRODUCT PAGE**.