



When we ask executive management teams about their current labor strategies, they will often explain what their strategy should be instead of acknowledging their current labor reality. We hear about 3-shift operations working Monday-Friday with weekends off. As we dig deeper, however, we learn that employees are working at least 20 weekends a year, morale is low, absenteeism and turnover are high, and the current schedule is broken.

Where are these management teams going wrong?

**THE FIRST STEP IS ADMITTING YOU HAVE A PROBLEM**

We often ask management teams how the demand for their products and services equals exactly 120 hours of labor coverage. They usually smile and say, "Of course it does not provide perfect coverage, but this is what we have had forever, and we change it all the time to make it work." Talk about a contradiction.

Although labor strategies designed with no weekend work are often simple, easily understandable, and predictable, they often do not provide adequate production capacity during the "traditional" workweek.

The lack of planned capacity forces managers to constantly move people around to meet the actual demand. In principle, labor strategies with no weekend work allow managers and businesses to operate within their comfort zones. However, last minute production changes on the shop floor cause last minute schedule changes. As a result, employees are "voluntold" to work overtime on their Saturdays and Sundays, destroying of employee morale and motivation.

**WARNING SIGNS "CHECKLIST" TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE CURRENT SCHEDULE IS BROKEN**

- Rapid company growth
- High amounts of Saturday and Sunday overtime
- High levels of absenteeism and turnover
- Event driven demand (outside of management's control)
- Inaccurate forecasting
- Irrationally low inventory
- Increasing reliance on temporary employees to cover off-shifts

## STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS BROKEN MONDAY-FRIDAY SCHEDULES

Awareness is the first step in addressing the realities of broken schedules. The next step is to review solutions to mitigate the symptoms:

- Alternative shift lengths that provide more days off, even with weekend work
- Alternative day-on / day-off patterns to share the burden of weekend work
- Employee outreach to learn preferences pertaining to their current schedules
- Built-in overtime for employees that want more hours (predictable overtime hours each week)
- Leveraged technology (scheduling tools, analytics, and activity management)
- Longer periods of time off, allowing employees to recuperate and enjoy quality time with their families and friends

## BEGIN THE TRANSITION

Transitioning from traditional Monday-Friday labor strategies to alternative labor strategies is an emotional process. Changing employee schedules is something that very few companies do well, and many companies do very poorly. Although challenging, getting out of your comfort zone and coming to terms and embracing the fact that you are no longer a Monday through Friday operation is the key to turning your company into a more responsive, agile, and resilient operation.

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To learn more about alternative labor strategies and how to design and develop the best labor strategy for your actual demand requirements, contact John Frehse.



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