



CASE STUDY

How Two Healthcare Facilities
Improved Efficiency by Updating
Their Scheduling Methods



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It's been said that efficiency is the cornerstone of survival, and effectiveness is the foundation for success. This may never be more applicable than it is to the healthcare industry.

Every day, healthcare facilities rely on staff members to efficiently and effectively provide the often life-dependent care patients deserve and expect. Whether it's a local clinic with a team of ten employees or an integrated health care system with multiple locations, every health care facility relies on its staff to deliver exceptional care 24/7.

Managers in the healthcare industry, however, understand that ensuring the right people are in the appropriate place at the correct time is challenging. Issues such as patient acuity, census counts, and shift requirements must be considered when creating staff schedules. Factor in call offs, time-off requests and other last-minute changes, and it's easy to see why staff scheduling can be a time-intensive, laborious process for nurse managers.

That is what registered nurse Rhonda Briney and her team were experiencing at Sarah D. Culbertson Memorial Hospital, a critical access facility in Rushville, Illinois. “We do self-scheduling, so we had two separate paper documents, as well as the daily staffing grid,” Briney said. “Then we’d create an additional Excel spreadsheet with a two-week schedule. Any changes would require us to make manual edits to the paper schedules, then try to communicate the updates to the staff.”

Briney and her team were not alone in their scheduling frustrations. In Sandusky, Ohio, nurse supervisors at Firelands Regional Medical Center were struggling to manage the schedules for a staff of more than 2,000 employees.

“There were three different shifts each day, and four separate schedules to pick from,” said Beth Hartz, MSN, RB-BC, and director of nursing at Firelands. “To make a change for one employee, you literally had to access 12 different schedules. Also, shift trades and requests were done on paper; it was extremely overwhelming and time consuming.”

“Prior to ScheduleAnywhere, I would spend an average of seven to ten hours per week working on schedules,” said Hartz. “Now, I spend less than 20 minutes per day on scheduling tasks, and I’m in charge of one of the largest schedules in the entire facility.”

The resources required to manage the staff’s intricate schedules meant the supervisors had less time to focus on their core responsibilities. Briney and Hartz knew there had to be a better solution, and each began researching alternative scheduling systems.

“I examined several scheduling programs,” said Briney. “I knew we needed an online, cost-effective system that would work for the unique scheduling demands of our healthcare facility.” A medical/surgical supervisor and patient care coordinator for acute and swing bed services at Culbertson, she, along with other nurse supervisors, oversees scheduling for over 50 nurses.

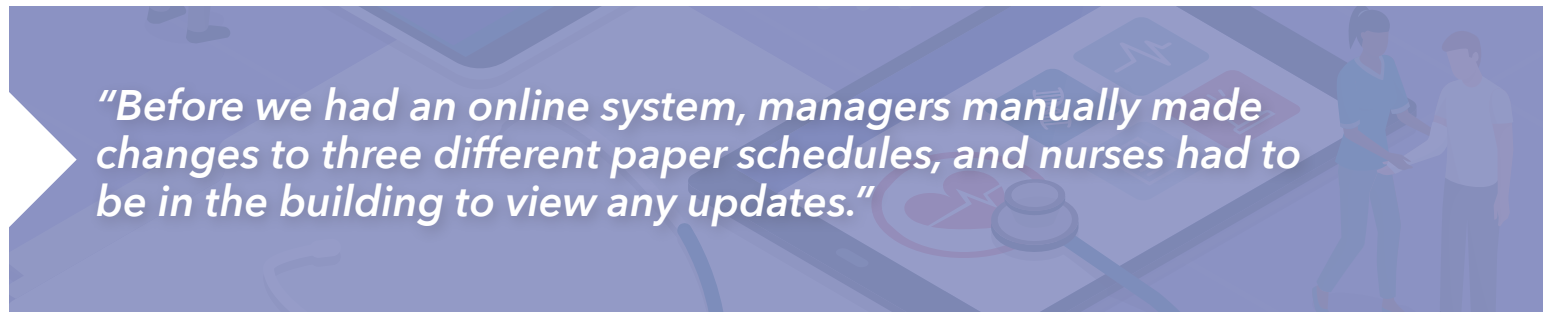
Hartz was looking for a scheduling program that allowed visibility of multiple schedules for numerous departments and locations across the entire Firelands organization. “We wanted the ability to use one scheduling platform in multiple locations for nurses, orderlies and physicians in both inpatient and outpatient settings,” said Hartz.

Because hospitals operate 24/7, finding a system that works well for shift coverage was imperative for both healthcare organizations. Real-time communication between staff and administrators, as well as among various departments, was another critical requirement.

After comparing several options, Briney and Hartz each decided on ScheduleAnywhere employee scheduling software for their respective facilities. Both were immediately impressed with the amount of time they saved by switching to an online system.

“Prior to ScheduleAnywhere, I would spend an average of seven to ten hours per week working on schedules,” said Hartz. “Now, I spend less than 20 minutes per day on scheduling tasks, and I’m in charge of one of the largest schedules in the entire facility.” As inpatient unit director, Hartz personally manages over 100 nurse’s schedules.

An additional function of the online software that increased scheduling efficiency is [Coverage Watches](#), a ScheduleAnywhere feature that tracks the number of people or hours scheduled by position, department, skill, credentials or shift. “Prior to implementing this software, I would have to count line by line and jot down numbers with a pencil to be sure I had enough staff in each department,” Hartz said. “Now, I simply scroll to the bottom of the screen and it is all there for me.”



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Beyond creating the initial schedules, both nurse supervisors added that managing call-offs, shift-swaps and last-minute [schedule requests and changes](#) were also time-intensive tasks. “Before we had an online system, managers manually made changes to three different paper schedules, and nurses had to be in the building to view any updates,” Briney explained. “With the new software, supervisors can enter approved time-off and swap requests online. Employees see a ‘read-only’ version, so there is no chance of unapproved changes to the schedule.”

Online scheduling software also streamlines the internal communication process. Healthcare organizations have benefited from the ability of staff members to communicate instantly using the mobile app. Schedules are posted and can be accessed remotely, allowing employees to see their schedules, request time off and review staffing needs anytime, from any location. This is helpful for employees when they are considering whether to pick up an overtime shift, for example.

Additionally, nurse managers can create schedules for [multiple locations and departments](#). The software allows visibility of multiple schedules throughout the hospital, which ensures there are no scheduling conflicts or double booking of an employee. This ability to share resources not only improves staffing accuracy, it also reduces unnecessary overtime by providing the total hours scheduled across the entire organization.

Briney and Hartz agree that managers and directors are not the only ones who've benefited from the implementation of the online scheduling system. Staff members appreciate the ability to see real-time schedules from their phones and make schedule requests remotely. Additionally, each nurse manager feels her entire facility has increased productivity and streamlined communication.

"We have many departments, and each department has specific needs," said Hartz. "The ability to customize this software to accommodate user preferences has truly made this the only scheduling platform needed in the facility."

Ensuring the right people are in the proper place at the appropriate time is a challenge that managers face every day in the healthcare industry. The implementation of online scheduling software streamlines the scheduling process and fundamentally reduces the risk of scheduling conflicts and errors. If the adage is accurate, and efficiency truly is the cornerstone of survival, and effectiveness is the foundation for success, in an industry where lives are at stake every single day, an accurately-staffed healthcare facility is the epitome of perfection.



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About Sarah D. Culbertson Memorial Hospital

Sarah D. Culbertson Memorial Hospital is a 22-bed Critical Access Hospital that employs more than 200 staff members who provide around-the-clock care and support services for patients. In addition to its inpatient services, Culbertson maintains a 24-hour-a-day emergency department, as well as laboratory services. Additionally, the hospital offers cardio-pulmonary rehabilitation, imaging, outpatient geriatric psychology, surgical services, therapy services, wound clinic and multiple outpatient specialty clinics. The hospital also has family practice clinics in Astoria, Beardstown, Rushville and Table Grove, Ill.

More information: Culbertson Memorial Hospital; 238 S. Congress, Rushville, IL 62681 217-322-4321; www.cmhospital.com

About Firelands Regional Medical Center

Firelands Regional Medical Center is a 424-bed integrated healthcare system, serving an Ohio region with over 300,000 residents. The facility employs more than 260 medical staff members representing over 35 different specialties. Firelands is one of only two hospitals in the state to receive both Healthgrades® America's 100 Best for Orthopedic Surgery™ and Spine Surgery™ in 2018. It is also the recipient of the Healthgrades® 2017 Patient Safety Excellence Award™ and named among the top 10 percent in the nation for patient safety in 2017. The health system is a Verified Level III Trauma Center, a Certified Primary Stroke Center, and is the area's only Breast Imaging Center of Excellence.

More information: Firelands Regional Medical Center; 1111 Hayes Ave., Sandusky, Ohio, 44870 419-557-7400; www.firelands.com

About ScheduleAnywhere

ScheduleAnywhere is online employee scheduling software developed by Atlas Business Solutions. This Software as a Service (SaaS) works for any business that schedules shifts, including public safety, healthcare, energy, government, retail and business services.

The software ensures proper shift coverage, eliminates scheduling conflicts, estimates payroll costs, tracks certifications and training, and manages shift rotations, staff availability, overtime and time-off requests. ScheduleAnywhere is used by thousands of managers and businesses daily to streamline the employee scheduling process. Free trial accounts are available, and pricing is based on the number of employees scheduled.

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