



# Success Story: Crave Hospitality

Multi-unit fine dining group reduces labor costs and scheduling mayhem with HotSchedules and Logbook







## In a Snapshot

Established in 2007, CRAVE Hospitality provides locally sourced diverse food options with a high-energy, modern and welcoming environment. With more than 500 employees across 11 locations, and expansion into new concepts, such as Sopranos Italian Grill, it's clear that guests are finding the "CRAVE Experience" worth repeating.

When Jim Hofer, Director of Training and Service Excellence, arrived on the CRAVE scene several months ago, he immediately went to work to see how CRAVE could streamline their processes to ensure that managers and staff could maximize the time focused on guests. Right away, he identified an area for improvement: scheduling.

"We needed a fresh approach to our scheduling and communications activities. People had accepted that a manual solution was working just fine, but we set out to find efficiencies and systems that could put our managers in front of those that matter most; our guests and staff," Hofer explains.

Jim researched solutions for online scheduling, labor cost control and employee communications. Though he used HotSchedules at his previous two employers and was a big fan of the solution, he wanted to do his due diligence.

"I looked at several other options because I wanted to be able to show a clear return on investment in whichever solution I recommended. HotSchedules was the solution I felt would deliver a definitive impact to our bottom line right away."

With his research behind him, Hofer set out to get the HotSchedules solution rolled out as quickly as possible. HotSchedules' dedicated training and implementation team set up all the locations and integrated their sites with their Aloha point of sale.

### Their Story

Hungry for a more modernized scheduling and communication solution to meet their millennial workforces' demands, CRAVE Hospitality turned to HotSchedules for help.

### Challenges

- Wanted to reduce time spent on creating and managing the schedule to free managers to spend more time in the front of the house.
- Hoped to find a tool that would help them reduce labor costs.
- Needed to simplify manager communication, delegation and follow-through.

### Products

- HotSchedules
- Logbook

### Results

- 1.5% reduction in labor costs through reduced overtime scheduling, punctuality controls and sales and labor reporting.
- 75% reduction in time to create schedules.
- Quick implementation, thorough training and POS integration.





**1.5% reduction in labor costs using overtime reports and enforced punctuality.**



**75% reduction in the time it took managers to create schedules.**



**Easy integration with Aloha point of sale.**

“We wanted to get moving fast, and HotSchedules helped us make that happen,” Hofer explains. The installs occurred in quick succession over a period of a few weeks.

“The HotSchedules training process and materials were very helpful; our teams picked up on HotSchedules very quickly. It’s user-friendly and intuitive, and can be easily taught and utilized.”

## Scheduling In a Snap

With the CRAVE team trained and ready to go, managers and employees began using HotSchedules company-wide. Initial reaction to the announcement was mixed— some managers were comfortable with the old way of doing things, others were suspicious and a little nervous about a more technologically advanced solution.

Those doubts and concerns were quickly put to rest once they saw how much time they were saving. “Before HotSchedules, it was taking managers three to four hours to create schedules. Now, we’re seeing about a 75% decrease in time to generate schedules—to an hour or less,” says Hofer.

That time savings can be put to good use. Managers can move on to other tasks and can complete their schedules online, from anywhere, including the comfort of their homes. When they come into the store, they come in ready to work and focus on guests.

Staff members see the benefits too. Anyone with a HotSchedules account can check their schedule and make requests or changes from their computer or smartphone. They can also call the 24x7 automated, bi-lingual system to get the information they need.

“The different login options are among the best selling points for us, and especially our COO. There are so many ways you can access the system. You don’t have to come into the store at an inconvenient time to fill out the request-off form. That’s a real, tangible benefit to the staff,” adds Hofer. He adds that the staff all use their text alerts and email to get their schedule.

“When we rolled this out to our Sopranos restaurant, our staff thanked us for having such a great program in place,” Hofer says.

## Managing Labor Costs

In addition to time savings, HotSchedules' reporting functions have helped CRAVE stores save on labor

costs. From labor proforma reports to forecasting to overtime warning reports, HotSchedules arms managers with detailed information that helps reduce controllable labor costs, both day to day and year over year.

"All in all we've seen an overall labor cost reduction of 1.5% through the awareness of overtime scheduling, punctuality controls and understanding the flowthrough of guests and sales," he says.

As heavy users of the labor proforma and corporate level reporting options, CRAVE is able to see where some restaurants are achieving successes that can be applied across their other locations. "We use HotSchedules to compare how certain restaurants are accomplishing sales per labor hour efficiencies and, then we copy those best practices to other locations."

"For sure HotSchedules has helped us reduce overtime scheduling—I'd guess by 100%. We haven't drilled down into the specific numbers at CRAVE yet, but in my previous experience, we had about 30 to 50 hours a week in overtime before HotSchedules. After adopting HotSchedules and increasing visibility into where and how overtime was happening, it went down in all our locations, and one of our restaurants was able to go down to zero overtime for seven months."

## Raising the Communications Bar

Another invaluable tool to the CRAVE team is HotSchedules Logbook. Logbook appears as a tab right in the HotSchedules web app and can be easily accessed using any internet-compatible device. Managers no longer have to keep track of handwritten daily logs, which are often difficult to chase down, cumbersome to store and next to impossible to search. HotSchedules Logbook allows all managers to comment on day-to-day shift notes and information in a central date-bound, searchable format.

"Logbook has changed the game for our managers' communication, delegation and follow-through. Previously, our instore communications consisted of clipboards full of notes with no dates. The Manager's Red Book® was being used, but differently by each restaurant. Now, everything is under one umbrella and can be managed consistently and far more accurately. Finding records is a breeze and we can hold each other accountable. There's a cost savings there too."

That attention to communication spreads to the staff, who rely on HotSchedules as their internal

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-Jim Hofer,  
Director of Training and Service  
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“The HotSchedules Support Team is always incredibly helpful. Anytime I call, they respond. I really can’t say enough great things. Their response time and follow-through are among the reasons why I like HotSchedules so much.”

-Jim Hofer,  
Director of Training and Service Excellence,  
CRAVE Hospitality

communications for company-wide news and location-specific messages. “HotSchedules has created a real sense of community among our employees,” says Hofer. “It’s like Facebook for our company. I had worried about it making scheduling and communication impersonal, but in fact our staff and managers now have more time to connect with each other and grow as a team.”

## Stellar Support

The HotSchedules solution is backed by its unrivaled service and support team. Live calls are taken seven days a week in both English and Spanish, and the automated phone system can be accessed 24x7. HotSchedules also has an online user forum and community to facilitate feedback and questions.

The CRAVE team also has a dedicated HotSchedules Customer Success Manager. The account management team is comprised of highly experienced project managers who make it their job to know their customers’ businesses and to ensure complete client satisfaction.

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What’s more, the HotSchedules forum is also used by the HotSchedules Development Team to field customers’ suggestions for improving the tools. Every few weeks upgrades, enhancements and fixes are pushed out seamlessly to the users. “With HotSchedules, customers are part of the process. We know we can call or write and be heard and the evidence shows up when we log in and see improvements happening,” he adds.

## A Partnership for the Future

With CRAVE’s plans for growth and expansion, they need solutions and vendor-partners they can rely on to be with them and grow with them.

“We’re a growing company, and HotSchedules continues to show their commitment to supporting us through that growth. They have great employees, executives and managers and when you have incredible vendor-partners like Hotschedules; your company can do whatever you can imagine.”



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