



# Success Story: P.F. Chang's China Bistro

How One Powerful Restaurant Force Empowered their Workforce with Labor Solutions that Scale Across Locations and Concepts



P.F. CHANG'S.

In a Snapshot

**P**.F. Chang's China Bistro (NASDAQ: PFCB) is a full-service upscale casual dining restaurant that provides its guests with consistently outstanding Chinese cuisine, attentive personal service, an innovative beverage program and an inviting dining environment, all at a great value for their dollar.

P.F. Chang's owns and operates 213 full service Bistro restaurants that feature a blend of traditional Chinese cuisine. The company's restaurants offer flavored, culinary creations, prepared from ingredients, including herbs and spices imported directly from China. The menu features traditional Chinese offerings and dishes. Additionally, P.F. Chang's owns and operates 200 quick casual Pei Wei restaurants.

Previously, P.F. Chang's managers were scheduling 150+ employees working more than 650 different shifts each week. Creating weekly schedules was very time consuming for managers. Understaffing or overstaffing were frequent and managers usually had to sit down at home with pen and paper to create schedules.

P.F. Chang's knew it needed a solution to successfully manage the stressful and time-intensive employee scheduling process—and what they got with HotSchedules was that and more. From intelligent labor forecasting to a highly effective communication portal, HotSchedules offered a full labor management solution for P.F. Chang's.

## The Roll-Out

Soon after the first location implemented HotSchedules, word-of-mouth kicked in and quickly spread across the chain, and although it wasn't mandatory to implement, each restaurant saw the benefits of the solution and signed on one-by-one, prompting P.F. Chang's Corporate to embrace the solution chain-wide.

## Their Story

Tired of dealing with the unnecessary stress of unscalable scheduling tools, P.F. Chang's turned to HotSchedules to not only deliver best-in-class schedules, but even more robust reporting and forecasting capabilities.

## Challenges

- Scheduling 150+ employees working more than 650 different shifts each week was time consuming and laborious for managers.
- Overstaffing was a frequent problem.
- Managers had to try to create schedules at home using pen and paper, since they didn't have enough time while in the restaurant.

## Products

- HotSchedules

## Results

- Scheduling time reduced by 75%.
- Improved employee morale due to increased flexibility and control.
- Labor budgeting tools ensure the right employees are scheduled and have reduced incidents of over/understaffing.







**Reduced time to create schedules by 75% - from 2-4 hours to 20-30 minutes.**



**Created more accurate schedules using labor budgeting and forecasting reports.**



**Better communication across all stores using company wide and store-specific message functionality.**

The HotSchedules Support team took a hands-on approach by training the staff and management at each location across the country, with the final location rolled out in 2008. "The program is very easy and highly effective to use once you've participated in the HotSchedules training program," says Peggy Rubenzer, who was the VP of Training, P.F. Chang's. "Through each implementation, the HotSchedules team managed and supported the program so it did not weigh on our IT or training staff. They also have a firm understanding of restaurant operations, from the staff, management and corporate perspectives."

## Increased Efficiencies

While managers previously spent 2-4 hours scheduling wait staff alone, they can now produce complete staff schedules in just 20-30 minutes with HotSchedules schedule templates. Managers no longer have to sift through disorganized papers for employee availability and schedule requests. All this information along with employee contact details is easily accessible in the HotSchedules Manager portal, which managers can access anywhere, anytime, easily and securely over the web.

Additionally, P.F. Chang's uses HotSchedules' labor budgeting tools to more accurately schedule the right employees for each shift and avoid costly errors due to over or understaffing. Along with the P.F. Chang's IT team, HotSchedules helped to develop a custom interface for its Aloha POS. This interface enables a single point of entry for HR data, while polling time card punches and sales for reporting. Furthermore, staff schedules export nightly to the Aloha POS to take advantage of the native punctuality control. Beyond integration and labor controls, HotSchedules provides extensive reporting to give P.F. Chang's managers a window into their operations. Instant overtime warnings and Scheduled vs. Actual reports empower managers with more time and greater accuracy to proactively manage their workforce.

## Excellence in Communications

P.F. Chang's has found HotSchedules to be extremely useful as a communications portal. The company can share messages from the corporate office to all team members, or managers at individual restaurants can alert their employees of upcoming staff meetings or company initiatives. "It's a great place for us to share positive messages with all of our restaurants and keep reinforcing the things that make us successful,"



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-Peggy Rubenzer,  
Previously VP of Training,  
P.F. Chang's China Bistro

Rubenzer explains. "We receive thousands of positive guest comments each week, and we like to pick the best responses and post them for all of our managers and employees to see."

The HotSchedules communication features have also helped during emergency situations. "When P.F. Chang's locations in Louisiana were hit by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, we used HotSchedules to communicate to our employees, find out where everyone had scattered, and route relief funds to employees affected by the storm," Rubenzer said. "The HotSchedules system is a perfect way for us to communicate all types of communication, including urgent emergency communications, to one or all of our locations."

Managers and operators also use The HotSchedules Logbook. Logbook encourages more frequent and comprehensive communication among the management team at each location and ensures that everyone on the team is accountable. All shift information and highlights—such as employee counseling, petty cash totals, repair and maintenance issues, and any other important notes from a shift—are securely documented for the management. Using Logbook, this information is easily documented, searched, and archived. Just like the manager's scheduling portal, Logbook is easily accessible anywhere with secure login, so if a manager forgets to log something, they can add it in from home instead of trying to remember to backlog during their next shift.

From start to finish, HotSchedules has proven to be a highly-effective labor management solution for P.F. Chang's that both the staff and managers love using—and they couldn't imagine going back to the old way. Currently, P.F. Chang's is transitioning from HotSchedules Team to Enterprise for even greater labor savings. "In our experience, HotSchedules has always been eager and willing to partner with us on any new initiative that comes up," says Rubenzer. "They have never put a limit on the service they provide."



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