



THE HOTSCHEDULES

Guide to Managing Minors

Managing Gen Z

Tips, Tools and Tactics to Keep Teenage Employees Engaged and Your Restaurant Compliant

For as long as anyone can remember, the restaurant industry has employed teenagers. It's why nearly one in three Americans can say their first job was in the restaurant industry. A summer away from school, a part-time gig to earn some dollars - you could almost call teens in restaurants a time-honored tradition! Although restaurants today look for a diverse range of ages and do not discriminate when hiring, teenage workers still represent one-third of all those employed.

These young employees are an invaluable part of the industry's dynamic workforce, but they also present a set of unique challenges for owners, operators and managers alike. First, businesses must be sure to maintain compliance with an ever-expanding number of labor laws that regulate minors. And second, businesses need to engage their young workforce in ways that motivate, educate, and inspire them to consistently do great work and deliver a great guest experience.

There's really no secrets when it comes to our industry's teenagers. The Gen Z demographic is as transparent as they come and expect it from their employers, too.

In this guide, we'll highlight the engagement and compliance challenges restaurants face with this group of workers. And then we'll walk you through best practices we've seen work using mobile scheduling apps and digital communications tools.





No Minor Task: Staying Compliant with Child Labor Laws

The first step to managing minors is making sure that you're doing it legally. When it comes to managing minors, the risk of being out of compliance with federal and state labor laws is more substantial in the restaurant industry than other. Today's child labor regulations often leave restaurants struggling to manage age groups, school schedules, time limits, nitpicky equipment use rules, state-required work permits and certifications, and monthly audits, among other responsibilities.

The Department of Labor is the federal agency that monitors and enforces child labor laws. The most sweeping federal law that restricts the employment and abuse of child workers is the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). FLSA restricts the hours youth can work and lists hazardous occupations too dangerous for young workers to perform. The federal child labor laws ensure that young people's jobs do not jeopardize their health, wellbeing, or educational opportunities. They are in place for good reason.



According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety, about 160,000 American children suffer occupational injuries every year, and as many as 54,800 of these injuries warrant emergency care.

THE RULES

The rules vary by age, falling into two groups: 14 and 15, and 16 and 17. For example, 16- and 17-year-olds may be employed for unlimited hours in any occupation other than those declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor. For 14- and 15-year-olds, they may be employed in restaurants and QSRs outside of school hours in a variety of jobs for limited periods of time and under specified conditions. But the laws get much more granular on a variety of issues, such as who can use what kitchen equipment. Plus, along with federal laws, every state has its own child employment laws and standards for how and when minors can be employed, some often even more stringent than federal laws. Other laws also affect minors' ability to work include compulsory school attendance laws and licensing restrictions based on age.

THE PENALTIES

In addition to the penalties associated with the infraction, a restaurant could also:

- Be required to pay lawyer fees
- Experience damage to their reputation and sales
- Held criminally liable
- Be sentenced to jail for a first offense

VIOLATIONS STILL PERSIST

Despite the clear incentives to follow minor labor laws to a "T," restaurants go afoul of child labor laws all of the time. For example, between October 1, 2015, and June 30, 2016, the Dept. of Labor found FLSA violations in 95 percent of restaurants it investigated. The charges ranged from minimum wage and overtime violations to child labor violations, such as allowing minors to operate and clean hazardous equipment. Child labor violations are often discovered when the agency is investigating other workplace violations.



A RECENT INFRACTION

For example, the Dept. of Labor ordered Street's Seafood Restaurant in Bay Minette to pay almost \$43,000 for violating labor laws, including child labor laws. During the investigation, the agency found that the restaurant employed four minors ages 15 to 17 to work regularly in occupations prohibited for any workers less than 18 years old.

Investigators found the employer:

- Required minors to operate, dismantle, clean, and reassemble a meat slicer and a dough mixer
- Required a 17-year-old to operate a motor vehicle to transport food to catering events
- Required a 15-year-old to work more hours than allowed by law
- Failed to maintain proof of age of minors



Tips for Managing Today's Teenagers More Effectively with Tech Tools

No one said working with today's next generation of restaurant staff members was going to be easy. But it can be easier when restaurants employ scheduling and labor-management tools that support their communication and compliance goals. Here are some ways these tools can make working with Gen Z and complying with minor labor laws so much easier in your restaurant.

Simplify Complex Labor Compliance

Given the complexity of child labor laws and the likelihood of making mistakes, automating as much of compliance as possible makes managers' jobs infinitely easier — while reducing the risks. In fact, the right technology lets restaurants “set it and forget it.” This effectively keeps managers in the safety zone. At a minimum, operators need the following three compliance functions automated:



MINOR LABOR RULES AND THRESHOLDS. Add minor labor rules, including federal and those unique to states of operation, to your scheduling system to prevent inadvertently breaking laws. This includes setting maximum hours per shift and week, programming strict clock-in and clock-out times, adhering to meal and break policies, and responding to alerts if any schedules violate the law.



SCHOOL CALENDARS. To stay compliant with school calendar rules at the store-level, operators need district-by-district data and to know which minors attend which schools. To prevent mistakes, this information needs to be programmed into their scheduling systems and alerts set. Equally important is allowing minors to input their off-calendar commitments, such as, finals week, sports team travel, and other conflicts.



STORED DOCUMENTATION. Restaurants need to document and track the scheduling and time and attendance data for every shift and back it up to storage, preferably in the cloud. In the event of an investigation, having this documentation on file can provide the valuable proof that your restaurant is compliant with child labor laws.



Engaging Gen Z: Why it Matters

On top of keeping your business compliant and your young employees safe, you also want to keep them coming back to work for you. Research shows that loyal, engaged employees contribute to increases in productivity, customer satisfaction, and, best of all, SALES.

Many minors work in restaurants on a seasonal basis. According to the *National Restaurant Association*, the restaurant industry is one of the economy's largest creators of seasonal jobs during the summer, adding more than 500,000 jobs during an average season. If you can engage your young workers and keep them coming back, it cuts down on the time and money it takes to train new ones. So, how do you engage young workers? Well, first let's look at who they are...

Meet the New Kids on the Block – Gen Z

Just when you thought you knew your Millennial workforce like the back of your hand, a new kid has arrived on the scene — Gen Z. If you think these young men and women are just a younger version of Millennials, think again. Kids born between 1995 and 2014 have their own views of the world — and the workplace.

Search for “Gen Z” on Google and you'll find no end to the number of reports, articles, and more on the unique characteristics of this new generation. Everyone wants to better understand this group of teenagers — from marketers to employers. Restaurant owners and managers above all need to understand the intricacies of Gen Zs, because they are their next largest group of staff members.



Don't Call Them "Millennials"

The first thing you should know about Gen Z is they don't want to be called Millennials. They are very different from their older brothers and sisters in several significant ways — including ways that impact their places of employment. Here are just a few:

1. MILLENNIALS TRANSITIONED INTO THE DIGITAL AGE. GEN Z WAS BORN INTO IT.

This digitally native generation is making unique demands on the workforce — and the restaurant industry is no exception. An article in *Inc. Magazine* stated that “40 percent of Generation Z said that working Wi-Fi was more important to them than working bathrooms.” Having constant Internet access has been a part of their lives from the beginning, so they expect everything to be “techified”—from communications to scheduling (ideally through apps).

2. MILLENNIALS WANT TO MATTER. GEN Z WANTS STABILITY.

According to *Forbes*, when it comes to their work lives, “Millennials primarily crave mattering [while] Generation Z [craves] safety first, mattering second.” This is because Gen Z grew up during the Great Recession, a time when being gainfully employed was uncertain. Their need for stability will extend to scheduling, for example. While Millennials have put up with erratic schedules, Gen Z won't. This fits right into the current industry movement, where workers in multiple areas are lobbying for more predictable week-to-week schedules.



3. MILLENNIALS TEND TO JOB HOP. GEN Z WANTS TO STAY LOYAL TO ONE COMPANY.

Gen Z workers hope to advance up the ladder. As a result, they are looking to develop within their current jobs rather than find new ones somewhere else. “If they’re not developing their skills and deepening their knowledge, they won’t hesitate to look for a job that offers more robust professional development opportunities,” says Robert Half of the Robert Half staffing agency. So, opportunities for on-the-job training and professional growth will be critical for these workers to enjoy job satisfaction.

4. MILLENNIALS GOT TROPHIES FOR EVERYTHING. GEN Z HAD TO FIGHT HARD TO WIN.

Unlike Millennials, who were raised in economically stable times, Gen Z-ers were raised during times of financial distress. As a result, “We have a generation entering the workforce that is extremely competitive,” according to David Stillman, co-author, with his 17-year-old son Jonah, of the book, *Gen Z @ Work*. Some Gen Z traits even seem “old-school.” For example, three-quarters of Gen Z say they’re willing to start at the bottom and work their way to the top. This can result in brand loyalty, like young workers returning every year for summer jobs in the same restaurants.

Engagement Strategies for Today's Teenagers

The characteristics of Gen Z are clearly a departure from previous generations. So are the communication strategies to reach them. With that in mind, it's important for restaurant operators to take the time to learn how to best attract, interact with, and retain today's youngest workers as high-quality, valued employees. Here are several insights to build on for better Gen Z engagement and communication.



CAPTURE THEIR ATTENTION IN EIGHT SECONDS — THINK: “SNACKABLE” MESSAGES.

Although Gen Z members are notorious multi-taskers, the assumption that they have the attention spans of hummingbirds is a vast misconception. What they have is an eight-second filter. Bombarded with limitless information, Gen Z-ers sort through clutter to decide what's worth their time. This means messaging needs to be captivating, attention grabbing, and fresh. Pro tip: Think short and digestible “snackable” text and images, like emojis.



YOU'LL FIND THEM ON FIVE DEVICES — SO REACH THEM FROM EVERY ANGLE.

Why use one screen when you can use five? It's common for Gen Z-ers to watch television, surf the Internet on their laptops, edit Instagram photos on their phones, and text on their iPads — simultaneously. They also have a desktop at the ready, just in case. Clearly, they are not only comfortable with all forms of technology, but expect to engage on tech tools.



TRANSPARENCY, AUTHENTICITY, AND A GENUINE “GIVE-BACK” ARE KEY.

Born with information at their fingertips, members of this generation are careful communication consumers, and can sniff out sugarcoating and empty corporate promises a mile away. Look for opportunities to communicate openly and honestly.



CELEBRATE COMMUNITIES THAT SHARE THE SAME VALUES.

Aligning with their passions will position you as a “friend” and spark better on-the-job communication and engagement, as well as more opportunities for them to share your message via word-of-mouth and social chatter. So, celebrate the issues that get your young staff members excited inside and outside your four walls.



TREAT STAFF WELL.

Gen Z cares about how a company treats its people. From the moment that members of Gen Z step into your restaurant, they are immediately evaluating you as their potential employer. They look for brands that have inspiring messages that speak to them and show that the company values its employees.



PROVIDE THEM WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO DO THINGS OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONE.

Gen Z is often fearful they don't measure up, so give them opportunities to grow. For example, if they are less outgoing, have them work as greeters to help build on their interpersonal skills. Ask them about their end goals and determine ways you can help them get there. For them, work is not just a “means to an end.” They want to make an impact.



OFFER A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE.

They don't mind working weekends, but they value work-life balance. Give them the flexibility they need, while also working within hours allowed by child labor laws.



Make Staff Engagement More Successful

It's clear that Gen Z workers are tech-savvy. So, it makes sense that communicating with them effectively in ways that improve their job performance must include technology. Tools like apps and mobile-based scheduling will go a long way toward achieving this goal. But how else can your restaurant make that oh-so-critical connection with Gen Z to motivate them and steer them in the right direction? Here are several potent engagement ideas:

1 ENCOURAGE THEIR PARTICIPATION THROUGH MOBILE APPS.

Encourage them to take charge of their schedules to set their availability, request time off, swap shifts, view who they're working with, sync schedules to their mobile calendar, message coworkers, read announcements, and more.

2 COMMUNICATE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS FROM THE BEGINNING.

Teens may be motivated and intelligent, but have a casual approach to work. Give them clear guidelines on essential issues, such as, punctuality, handling emergencies, calling in sick, texting at work, and chatting with friends who stop by.

3 CROSS TRAIN TEENAGERS IN MULTIPLE JOBS.

Cross training builds teamwork, responsibility, and loyalty, and reduces friction. It also inspires Gen Z workers to stretch themselves.

4 COACH.

Teens are like sponges and easily absorb guidance and information. So, guide, mentor, and train them in all aspects of the operation — from customer service to cleaning up spills.

5 PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK.

Teens tend to take criticism personally and may be sensitive, so be clear, calm, and positive when giving feedback. View poor performance as a training opportunity. Reward the positive rather than criticize the negative.

6 REWARD INITIATIVE.

If teens show a talent or interest in a specific area, give them an opportunity to develop those talents. Even better, bring it into a centralized communication hub where you can track and even report on level of engagement.

7 CHEER THEM ON.

A manager with a positive attitude will gain the respect and cooperation needed to turn teen workers into valuable team members.

Employing young people can be a tricky balancing act, but if you have the right solutions in place, you can ensure that your business avoids hefty fines and accidents while cultivating an enthusiastic, engaged, and productive workforce. HotSchedules is delivering the technology solutions that can help your restaurant drive safely in the compliance lane and effectively engage young.

For more information, contact us today!



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