



Success Story: R&J Restaurants, LLC

A Blaze Pizza Franchisee



Blaze Pizza is one of the hottest brands in the nation. The company applies a made-to-order, assembly-line approach to pizza, emphasizing customization with a wide variety of everything that makes a great pizza - cheeses (obviously), proteins, vegetables, and sauces. After they're assembled, the pizzas are put into an open-fire oven and ready in 3 minutes flat.

In 2018, Blaze topped Franchise Times' Fast & Serious list, the publication's annual ranking of the smartest-growing restaurants in the industry. LeBron James, famously an early investor in the company, is among their vast franchisee network.

So is Joseph Stein, owner and founder of R&J Restaurants, a Southern California franchise group founded in 2013. Since their inception, R&J has grown to 12 locations and plans to open its 13th Blaze Pizza by the end of 2019. Efficiency is key to Blaze Pizza — and that's where HotSchedules, Now Powered by Fourth comes in.

Overcoming Manual Process

Prior to implementing HotSchedules, R&J's Blaze locations used Excel spreadsheets to handle employee scheduling.

"We had manual, rudimentary processes," Stein says.

Stein knew that R&J needed a more efficient employee scheduling solution, so he fielded advice from fellow franchisees, as well as a few of his managers. Those conversations



Their story

This Southern-California based Blaze Pizza Franchisee has helped save managers time on building schedules, improve communication, and staff their stores more efficiently with HotSchedules.

Challenges

- Scheduling in Excel spreadsheets
- Inconsistent modes of communication
- Managers spending too much time on administrative tasks

Products

- HotSchedules Integrated with NCR Aloha

Results

- Cut scheduling time from 6 hours to 1 hour
- Decreased manager headaches with shift-swaps and time-off requests
- Streamlined communication with in-app messaging

pointed in one direction — HotSchedules.

"We chose HotSchedules because we spoke to a number of other franchisees that were using HotSchedules and liked it," Stein says. "Plus, a couple of our managers had worked at other companies that used HotSchedules



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and they were big proponents of the solution, too.”

R&J has had HotSchedules integrated with their NCR Aloha POS system for a year, and Stein says has seen scheduling become more efficient and effective for managers.

“Our general managers see that it is so much easier to make schedules now,” Stein says. “One manager noted that it used to take him 5 to 6 hours to build a schedule, and now it takes about an hour. HotSchedules cuts significant time out of our week formerly spent making schedules.”

Increased Staff Accountability

The scheduling benefits don’t stop with the initial construction of a schedule, however. Stein says that the day-to-day management of employees has become easier as well, especially when it comes to fielding time-off requests and shift-swaps.

“HotSchedules has also been beneficial when dealing with requests for time off and shift swaps.

The tool allows for all of that to be done within the program,” Stein says. “That benefit is huge for the manager because they don’t really have to get involved other than to just approve a request rather than to try to be the intermediary.”

Managers are able to set deadlines around when employees can request off, as well as block off known busy days in advance so Blaze employees can arrange their plans accordingly.

“It has cut down on call-ins and scheduling mishaps,” Stein says.

The solution also empowers employees to take more control of their schedules, especially if somebody needs to get a shift covered.

“HotSchedules cuts significant time out of our week formerly spent making schedules.”

Joseph Stein,
Owner and Founder of R&J Restaurants



“If a manager schedules an employee on a day they can no longer work, its completely up to them to get it covered, and on the app they can easily do that,” Stein says.

Streamlined Communication with Messaging

The transition to HotSchedules has also helped Blaze managers more easily contact their team members, which can be a tall order in the restaurant industry.

In the event that one of Stein’s managers needs extra hands at the store, HotSchedules in-app messaging features allow that manager to contact their entire staff with the tap of a button.

“Managers like it because they can send a message out to everyone and it immediately

notifies them on the app,” Stein says. “If something comes up, they can send out a message so they don’t have to sit down and try to call down their staff list to try to find somebody to come in.”

Stein and the R&J team originally sought out a scheduling solution because they wanted to get their managers out of the back office — HotSchedules has helped them achieve that goal.

“We wanted our managers to be more efficient and spend less time doing back office stuff,” Stein says. “I can definitely tell we are scheduling more efficiently, so we have the right people on at the right times and that’s a win because it means better coverage.”