



Success Story: Joliet Slammers Stadium

Seasonal Staff Hits Home Run with HotSchedules Labor and Communication Tools





In a Snapshot

Imagine running a single restaurant. Now, imagine running the equivalent of 12 restaurants and 125 staff members at the same time all in the same location. That's the challenge Tom Fremarek faces every day as the Director of Food and Beverage for the Joliet Slammers.

The Joliet Slammers are a professional minor league baseball team located in Joliet, Illinois. The Joliet stadium, called Silver Cross Field, has an impressive 7,000-person capacity and provides guests with several experiences, including a 1,000-person picnic seating area, 14 indoor and outdoor skyboxes, two rooftop party decks and a 2,500-square-foot hall of fame room. Not only is the stadium home to the Slammers, it also hosts a number of other events, including the state high school baseball championships, themed movie nights and even weddings.

A Pinch Hit with HotSchedules

Before joining the Slammers, Fremarek spent nine years as a managing partner at Cheeseburger in Paradise Bar & Grill—a Jimmy Buffet restaurant concept. It was there that he got his first taste of better online scheduling and communication with HotSchedules.

"Rolling out HotSchedules was seamless," Fremarek recalls. "Sometimes there's a learning curve when you put in new software, but the tools were easy to use and the staff loved it. It was a win-win for everyone."

Fremarek took that experience with him to the Joliet Slammers, where it didn't take long for him to realize he needed an alternative scheduling and communication solution for such a large, complex organization.

"The first year was a crash-bang to get the place open," he says. "When I came here, we were literally doing paper schedules. We were getting ready to

Their story

With an impressive 7,000-person capacity, a 1,000-person picnic seating area, 14 indoor and outdoor skyboxes, two rooftop party decks and a 2,500-square-foot hall of fame room, the Joliet Slammer Stadium needs a lot of staff to take care of their ticket holders. Food and Beverage Director Tom Fremarek turned to HotSchedules to help them solve their scheduling, labor, forecasting and communication challenges—before they even opened.

Challenges

- Using time-consuming paper methods to create and manage schedules.
- No centralized way for seasonal staff to access and manage their schedules.
- Manage schedules across a large venue with 125 employees.
- No centralized tool to communicate stadium-wide or employee-to-employee messages.
- Manual scheduling methods made it nearly impossible to change schedules based on weather or other events that impacted the schedule.

Solutions

- HotSchedules
- HotSchedules PayControl & Webclock

Results

- Efficient scheduling for high-volume food and beverage program in large venue.
- Improved on-and-off shift communication between 125 employees and managers.
- Empowered young staff to manage their schedules with a work scheduling app.
- Reduced overall labor costs with enforced clock-ins.
- Centralized clock-ins, clock-outs and time and attendance management.
- Streamlined schedule and time punch exports and reduced errors.



**Reduced labor costs
with enforced
clock-ins**



**Seasonal staff
retention rate is as
high as 90%**



**Solved Communication
Issues across multiple
food & beverage
stations and 125
employees**

open and I told the owners, 'We're not going to make it through the first year without a scheduling program. I understand that we're a minor league baseball team, but HotSchedules is one thing I have to have. It's a necessity.' So we rolled it out. That was one of the first things I did."

Ace on the Right Bases

During the opening, the owners were also looking to make the facility more family-friendly. That initiative meant offering a lot of different food options. In addition to the standard hot dogs and soda, Joliet Slammers fans now have access to stands that offer popcorn, pizza, Italian food, funnel cakes, brats and cheese curds. This was on top of the two bars, 14 skyboxes (each with their own food packages and waitresses), and the two rooftop party decks.

If that sounds like a lot, it is. Thankfully, HotSchedules was able to simplify the scheduling process across the stadium from day one. Each area of the stadium (stand, skydeck or otherwise) is represented as a Location in their HotSchedules site.

"The HotSchedules Implementation Team configured our site using our locations and our actual stand names," Fremarek says. "I assign people an actual Location. When I look at our upcoming contracts, I can easily schedule employees. Once the schedules are out, employees can swap stands based on their job title or who is working."

Initially, stadium management used HotSchedules for food service. Today, they use it for gate attendees, ticket takers, ushers, stockers and other facility personnel. Expanding the usage across the entire stadium staff made it easy for employees to manage their split shifts. It's common for an employee to stock during the day and then work as an usher during the game later that evening. Most recently, they added their cleaning duties as Locations inside of HotSchedules so that Fremarek and his team know they have someone scheduled to clean, staff is accountable to the shift—all of which improves their guests' experience.

"If I had to do it all on paper or call all these people, it would be a nightmare," Fremarek says.

It's almost as if Fremarek is a regional manager than a manager of a single facility. "I couldn't do my job without HotSchedules and I honestly mean that," he says. "Trying to manage all the people in all these locations—my job would be ridiculous."

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Winning with Time & Attendance

Seasonal employees need the ability to clock in from any location around the stadium. They can do that now using HotSchedules Paycontrol and WebClock—the time and attendance solution. Previously, they were clocking in and out on spreadsheets which was inefficient and prone to error.

With the webclock, employees can clock-in from a centralized location at the stadium. Their time and attendance data is then recorded in the HotSchedules system so that Fremarek can review time punches and make any adjustments with employee acknowledgement prior to exporting the payroll data to payroll company.

"HotSchedules saved us money going into year two because we would enforce clock-in and out times," he says. Enforcing the clock-in and clock-out times is as simple as turning it on in the HotSchedules system and then telling the system how early before the start of a shift someone can clock-in.

"I couldn't put a number on it, but there definitely were immediate and long-term labor savings when we turned on enforced clock-ins."

Covering the Bases with Communication

When running a large venue, communications with your team are key. And Silver Cross Field is definitely

large, spanning several city blocks and drawing an anticipated 125,000 visitors in 2017.

His team uses the HotSchedules app to send messages to each other during the shift. So for example, if they need additional help over at the hotdog stand, they can send a message out to the team or Fremarek can send a broadcast message that hits all team members when they login to the web or mobile app.

As an example, if Fremarek sees that numbers at the picnic seating area jump up, he can use HotSchedules to move staff there instantly. Or if the picnic area closes temporarily due to weather, he can send a message to employees to come back instead of having to get on the phone to call 70 people when the sun comes back out.

"It's like having an admin at your side to do all the stuff that has to get done," he says. "It's a huge advantage. And it's something I definitely enjoy using. I'll even answer things on vacation. When I was in Hawaii and my family asked what I was doing, I would answer, 'I'm approving a shift.'"

Weather-Based Forecasting

Like most establishments in the hospitality and service industry, events, weather, and other external factors can influence guest and sales volume.

Event venues are subject to it all and can experience any number of potential pitfalls to a perfect game.

“We have a remarkably high retention rate—it’s usually as high as 85 to 90 percent.”

-Tom Fremarek, Director of Food and Beverage for the Joliet Slammers



With HotSchedules, Fremarek can adapt to changes, adjusting staff levels based on crowd size, on-site events or even fluctuations in overtime.

“Normally, overtime isn’t a monster issue because games are spread out. But during weeks that we play six or seven games in a row, overtime becomes a bigger factor,” he explains.

“We print the overtime report when we print the daily labor report. We print enough for all of my managers to have a co on hand. We also have the roster available. Each manager is assigned to a stand so if they have four cashiers, two helpers and two cooks, we know who out of those employees can be cut first based because the reports which tell us who has worked the most and who has the most overtime.”

Weather also has a huge impact on their staffing levels. “In baseball, we have rain-outs, delays and weather issues that impact everything we’re doing. Weather could reduce attendance or it could completely shut down the stadium. When that happens, I use HotSchedules to send out a Broadcast Message to let everyone know that, for example, the game is delayed and that we’re going to make cuts.”

Home Run on Retention

It’s that kind of communication, insight and scheduling best practices that keep seasonal employees coming back year after year. “We have a remarkably high retention rate—it’s usually as high as 85 to 90 percent,” says Fremarek.

He feels very fortunate for that kind of turnout. “I’ve been doing this a long time and we’ve never had a problem of getting or keeping staff. Now they send me their friends and siblings. Our whole thing is about having fun. That’s why I let them trade shifts to work with friends.”

Most employees are under 19, so they love the flexibility and communication they can do in the HotSchedules mobile app. Even during the offseason, Fremarek explains, they remain fully engaged with their teammates, something that’s made possible thanks to HotSchedules and the good experiences the tool helps facilitate for Fremarek and his team.



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