



Strategic Workforce Planning

 **BlueYonder**
Fulfill your potential™

Combatting Today's Labor Challenges with Flexible Scheduling

Labor shortages are everywhere. There are a number of factors at play causing this shortage, and [economists predict this shortage will persist over years](#)¹, if not permanent. We're living in a time of the "Great Resignation," where workers across the globe are re-evaluating their careers after the pandemic shocked their previous daily habits. There's also a "Great Retirement," where [2 million more seniors retired in 2020](#)² than expected because soaring stocks and real estate valuations have made them rich. To make labor challenges even worse, there's a gap between available jobs and applicants with the right job skills, making it difficult to fill open positions.

The best way to combat labor shortages is to make the most of the workforce you have today. Happy employees who are compensated fairly, have the work/life balance they need, and are fulfilled by their work typically don't leave. The key is fully

understanding what's most important to each employee, such as their definition of work/life balance, what they're passionate about, and what motivates them. From there, you can design strategic plans for your workforce that helps you retain and grow employees, and cut down turnover, which hurts your bottom line and customer service levels. If you want to get the most out of your workforce, you must fine tune your workforce management systems and scheduling processes to align with their individual needs.



Hiring a new employee typically costs

1.25-1.4

times the salary.³

1 "4.3 Million Workers Are Missing, Where Did They Go?" Wall Street Journal, 2021.

2 "These Older Workers Hadn't Planned to Retire So Soon," NPR.org, 2021.

3 "How Much Does an Employee Cost You," US Small Business Administration, 2019.

First, Know Your Employees

It's no surprise that the people who work for you have different needs and different priorities. So, when it comes to designing work schedules that appeal to your employees, it's more complicated than looking at only job roles and availability. In fact, that's the bare minimum you can do. In today's competitive labor landscape, considering only these factors isn't enough to keep your workforce engaged and satisfied. Even if you look at small cross-section of employees, such as millennials, part-timers, or the newly hired, you'll see a lot of differences.

Two workers that joined your company at the same time, with the same skills, and the same hours may have vastly different reasons for working and

vastly different priorities. One may have very little schedule flexibility due transportation limitations, while the other may prefer to work different hours each day while balancing other "gigs" around town. With a traditional scheduling system, they may look the same – both are part timers that work 20 hours a week. But giving them the same schedule would definitely not make both of them happy.



“All People Are Different People”

Ted Lasso⁴

⁴ Ted Lasso is a fictional American soccer coach from a popular Apple TV series of the same name

Understand Flexibility is Fluid

There have been countless reports that today's employees value flexibility and that flexibility is key to retaining quality workers. So, what does it mean to offer "flexibility" to your workforce?

The [Oxford dictionary](#) defines "flexibility" as the ability to change to suit new conditions. But, that's not what employees really want. It's unlikely your employees want a new schedule or a new role every time business needs change. Instead, it's more likely each employee values a work schedule that accommodates his or her own personal needs and priorities — regardless of whether the schedule is changing

or consistent. In other words, individual employees don't necessarily value flexibility, they value autonomy. Every employee probably has a different idea of the 'perfect' schedule. Employers must be flexible in scheduling to align business needs with each employee's preferences. However, employees simply want to work schedules that align to their lifestyle — that's how they define flexibility.



68%
of employees say they'd
rather have better
work-life balance than
higher pay⁵

⁵ "Almost 70% of Workers Want a Career Change. They'd Take Better Work-Life Balance Over Higher Pay," Business Insider, 2021.

Give Employees What They Value Most

Strategic workforce planning goes beyond looking at availability to give employees the shifts they prefer, doing the jobs they prefer, each and every week. And, then extending this across every schedule and every location so that you are optimizing schedules to align with your labor needs while appealing to the priorities of all your employees. Blue Yonder's WFM includes advanced employee preference definitions to make this process easy, and repeatable for you and your employees.

Employees provide not only their availability, but also a priority ranking of everything from their preferred workdays and start times to preferred locations and job roles. Each of these preferences and rankings are fed into

the calculation for creating the weekly schedule, along with labor regulations, corporate policies and labor needs. While not every preference can be accommodated for every employee and every shift, the auto-generated, optimized schedule is far closer to ideal than ever before. Employees can always submit updates to their preferences over time, which will go into effect for future scheduling upon management approvals.

Consider how this might impact weekly scheduling. Let's assume an employee fills out their availability and preferences in both a traditional system and in Blue Yonder's WFM. Both systems capture availability, but Blue Yonder captures preferred job

function, preferred day off, and preferred hours per day.

This employee can work Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:00 AM until 4:00 PM, and is trained as a cashier and stock clerk. Digging deeper, the employee prefers to work longer shifts to have more days off, and while trained as a cashier enjoys stocking inventory more. These preferences are fed into both scheduling engines and weekly schedules are generated. **(See table below)**

The automated schedules both meet the employee's availability, but Blue Yonder's also considered preferences, so the employee will be happier.



	Traditional Schedule	Blue Yonder Schedule
Sunday	OFF	OFF
Monday	8 AM – 12 PM Stock Clerk	8 AM – 12 PM Stock Clerk
Tuesday	OFF	OFF
Wednesday	8 AM – 12 PM Cashier	8 AM – 4 PM Stock Clerk
Thursday	OFF	OFF
Friday	8 AM – 12 PM Cashier	OFF
Saturday	OFF	OFF
Total Hours	12	12

With Blue Yonder, the employee works more hours doing their preferred job and even gets an additional day off

Make Sure Business Needs are Covered

You may be asking, if you give every employee exactly the schedule they want, what about shift coverage? Blue Yonder's scheduling engine always considers labor demand as a key factor when building out schedules. This means sometimes employees will work their less-preferred shifts, but only when there aren't other qualified associates available to cover. In the case of the employee now working fewer cashier hours, those shifts are assigned to other qualified and available employees. This ensures the business always has full shift coverage every day while appealing to each individual's preferred work days, shift times, job functions and days off."

Make Schedules More Appealing with Open Shifts

Swapping shifts is a familiar concept when it comes to hourly employees. Blue Yonder WFM takes this a step further to allow employees to pick all their own shifts. Here's how it works. The scheduling engine produces a weekly schedule with all the shifts needed to meet demand. The only difference is that all the shifts are unassigned. The schedule gets published to a shift marketplace and employees can pick and choose the shifts they want. Automatic verification tools ensure that all regulations and policies are followed and employees meet the criteria for the jobs selected. For businesses that employ temporary and 'gig' workers, blank schedules are a great way to achieve higher shift coverage. Is there anything more flexible than giving employees complete control over their schedules?

Open Schedules Are Good for Employers and Employees Alike

- Gives employees full control
- Fewer call-outs or no-shows
- Supports 'gig' workers
- Higher average shift coverage

Conclusion

Labor shortages aren't going away. In fact, the increase in strikes this year suggest the worst is yet to come. Employees expect more from their employers than a paycheck, but not everyone wants the same thing. Taking an individualized approach to scheduling is one way to give employees what they value most. Blue Yonder's WFM helps organizations design schedules that are optimized to meet business needs, personalized to everyone, and aligned with labor regulations and policies.

[Learn more](#)



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