

Scheduling + Paid Leave: The Business Case

How does providing stable schedules benefit my bottom line?

Providing workers with stable schedules has been shown to improve retention, drive down absenteeism, raise productivity, and foster employee morale. Because stable scheduling helps employees better manage their personal and professional lives, it can help to reduce employee stress, drive increases in productivity, and produce valuable cost savings for businesses.

Lower turnover

When [Walmart started providing “open scheduling” across the majority of its 4,600+ stores](#) (where managers created schedules based on employees’ availability), the retailer saw a 14 percent drop in staff turnover, and now plans to roll out additional types of scheduling flexibility. In addition, another recent study of retail employees found that when managers took more care to consider employees’ scheduling needs, stores had about 23 percent lower turnover and 6 percent greater retention.

Increased productivity

Providing stable scheduling helps employees be more productive. In a survey of lower-wage, hourly workers with access to workplace flexibility, 80 percent of workers and 79 percent of workplace managers reported an increase in team effectiveness and productivity. Longer weekly working hours and irregular shifts exacerbate stress around work-family time conflicts. When employees have controlled hours and an ability to influence their work schedules (e.g. when they can request particular start and end times and take time off of work), studies show a significant association with reduced work-family conflict. That’s because when employees have less stress at home, they’re better able to concentrate fully on work, helping to boost productivity. Additionally, flexible and predictable schedules promote staff health, enabling them to perform their best on the job.

Lower absenteeism

By actively taking into account employees’ preferences and personal conflicts, providing schedules 2+ weeks in advance, and giving employees adequate hours, stable scheduling helps

to drive down absenteeism (employees habitually missing work without prior approval). In the same survey of lower wage, hourly workers, 64 percent of workers and 74 percent of managers reported reduced absenteeism in the workplace after the implementation of stable scheduling. Similarly, [Walmart's flexible scheduling initiative](#), in addition to lowering turnover, resulted in an 11 percent drop in absenteeism.

Stay ahead of the curve

While offering stable scheduling is a great way to empower employees and boost your bottom line, it may also become the law soon in certain regions. Some city governments, including in [Seattle](#) and [San Francisco](#), as well as at least [12 other state legislatures](#), are introducing laws or [launching investigations](#) to ensure fair scheduling practices for employees. Federal measures have also been proposed in recent years and are gaining nationwide traction. Businesses that adopt stable scheduling practices today will not only see benefits for their business, but will also be able to get ahead of the growing number of employee scheduling laws and regulations.

What are the benefits of paid leave to my business, employees, and me?

Despite the common perception that paid leave imposes unmanageable additional costs on small business owners, [studies have shown](#) that businesses have actually reaped benefits from the practice. And small business owners like you are increasingly seeing the value. With a paid leave policy, you can:

Recruit and keep talented workers

Leave policies that help your employees balance their professional and personal lives, especially for major events like the birth of a child or caring for a sick relative, allows your company to attract and retain talented staff members. Offering family or medical leave [demonstrates to employees](#) that you care about their health and general wellbeing, and that you're invested in their future at your business.

Increase productivity

While many small businesses owners fear that paid leave policies are too costly to manage, studies of workplaces with mandatory paid leave policies have consistently shown that most businesses do not suffer financially, but actually see positive results. In a [survey of small](#)

[businesses in California](#) with fewer than 50 employees, conducted 10 years after the establishment of a mandatory paid leave policy, 89 percent of business owners reported either no change or a boost in productivity since adopting paid leave.

Improve and protect employee and customer health

Healthy employees are critical across the retail industry, where interactions with customers are frequent—but they are especially important in food service. In fact, the Center for Disease Control estimates that 53 percent of norovirus outbreaks can be attributed to sick food handlers. In addition to spreading disease, employees who don't take time off for illness for fear of losing wages are [more likely to underperform](#) in their job duties. Small business owners can help sick employees get well and stop the spread of illness, resulting in better business outcomes when employees return to work, by promoting employee health and encouraging them to stay home when they are not well.

Reduce absenteeism

One way to combat the [persistent problem of absenteeism](#) (employees habitually missing work without prior approval) is to establish a sick leave policy. Setting up formal guidelines around shifts missed due to illness fosters greater accountability, and can even encourage sick employees to take the time off they need to get better. Many organizations have success with setting up a paid time off policy in which hours of paid vacation time are accrued as an employee works.