



Altametrics

LABOR MANAGEMENT MADE EASY:
THE COMPLETE CHECKLIST
FOR OPTIMIZING
WORKFORCE SCHEDULING



Ebook Guide



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Introduction

If you own or run a restaurant or business, you already know how tricky it can be to get the schedule just right. Too many people on shift? You're paying for labor you don't need. Not enough people? You're slammed during the lunch rush and customers start walking out. And when someone calls out last-minute or clocks in early, your whole day can get thrown off.

Here's the reality—labor is one of the biggest expenses in your restaurant. In fact, **most businesses spend about 30%–35% of their total sales on labor alone.** And a lot of that comes down to how well (or how poorly) the schedule is managed.

This guide is here to help you fix that.

We've broken it down into simple checklists that show you how to plan **smarter shifts, avoid costly mistakes like overtime or missed breaks, and stay ahead of employee requests and changes.** You don't need to be a scheduling expert—you just need a clear system that works week after week.

Let's take the stress out of scheduling and get you back in control.



Section 1

Assess Labor Needs by Daypart



One of the most common scheduling mistakes restaurant owners make is guessing how many people to schedule for a shift. It might feel easier to just copy last week's schedule, but that usually leads to overstaffing during slow hours and not enough help when it gets busy.

Start with Your Sales Data

Instead of guessing, use your past sales numbers to figure out when you're actually busy—and when you're not. Look at your sales by the hour and by the day for at least the last 4 to 6 weeks. This helps you spot clear patterns:

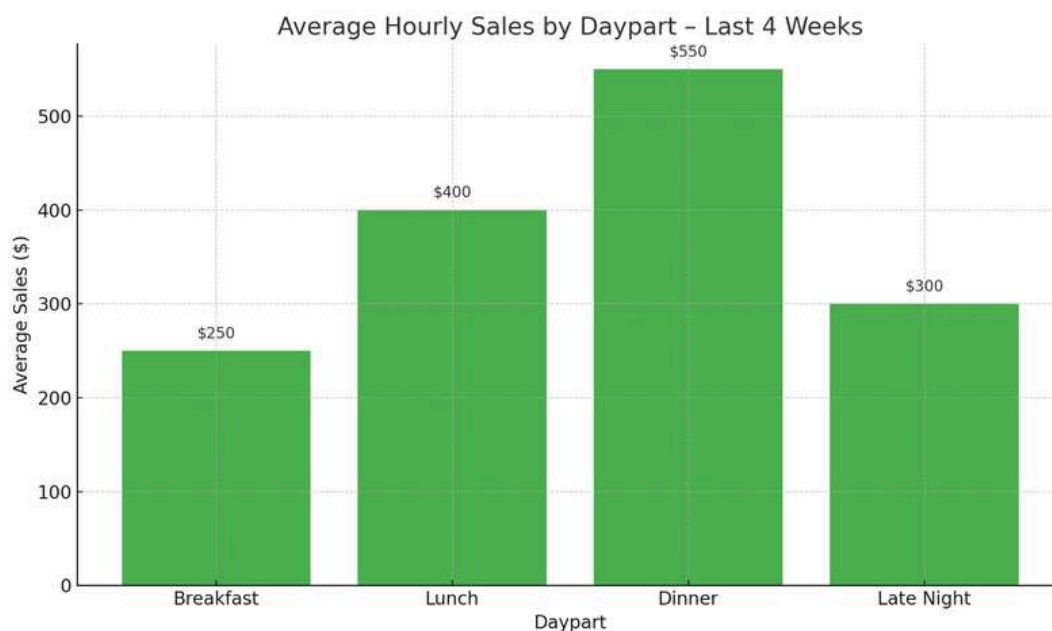
- When does the lunch rush start on weekdays?
- Are Friday dinners busier than Saturday lunches?
- Is Monday consistently slow?

Once you know when business picks up and slows down, you can match your staffing levels to customer demand.

What Is a Daypart?

Dayparts are simply chunks of the day: breakfast, lunch, dinner, and late-night. Your staffing needs will likely be different for each one. For example:


- **Lunch shifts** may only need a few servers and cooks.
- **Dinner shifts**, especially on weekends, usually need more coverage in both FOH and BOH.
- **Late nights** might only require a skeleton crew to close.



Checklist: Set Labor Needs by Daypart

Use this list each week before building your schedule:

- ✓ **Review past 4–6 weeks of hourly sales data**
- ✓ **Identify your busiest and slowest dayparts**
- ✓ **Note special patterns (big weekends, slow Mondays, events)**
- ✓ **Set a baseline number of staff needed per shift and role (FOH/BOH)**
- ✓ **Compare labor hours against projected sales to hit your labor % target**

 **Quick Stat:** Restaurants that schedule based on traffic patterns instead of routine reduce unnecessary labor by up to 15%.

By starting with real numbers, you'll avoid overstaffing, keep labor costs in check, and make sure your team isn't sitting around—or drowning during rush hour.

Section 2

Build Smart Schedules with Templates and Guardrails



Once you've figured out how many people you need by daypart, the next step is to actually build the schedule. Doing this from scratch every week is time-consuming—and it leaves more room for mistakes. That's where schedule templates come in.

Why Templates Save Time

Templates give you a solid starting point. You're not reinventing the wheel every week. You start with a basic setup—like how many servers and cooks you usually need on a Tuesday lunch shift—and then make small changes based on time-off requests, events, or sales forecasts.

This method works especially well for restaurants with consistent traffic patterns. You'll spend less time building schedules and more time fine-tuning them.



Set Guardrails to Avoid Surprises

Guardrails are just simple rules you follow to keep things running smoothly. For example:

- **Never schedule a double shift without checking last week's hours**
- **Avoid scheduling someone to close and then open the next day**
- **Keep new hires paired with more experienced staff during busy shifts**

These small rules go a long way in keeping things fair and predictable for your team.

Checklist: Create and Use Scheduling Templates

Use this list to get started with smart scheduling:

- ✓ **Build a base template for each day of the week**
- ✓ **Define standard shift blocks (e.g., openers, mids, closers)**
- ✓ **Assign the number of FOH and BOH needed per shift**
- ✓ **Add rules for common problems (e.g., no back-to-back close/open)**
- ✓ **Update templates once a month based on sales and team changes**

When Scheduling Software Helps

If you're still building schedules in spreadsheets or on paper, switching to scheduling software can save hours of your time. With the right tool, you can:

- Reuse and tweak templates automatically
- See labor cost projections in real-time
- Get alerts if you accidentally schedule overtime or skip a break

 **Pro Tip:** Let software generate your first draft. You just make the small adjustments that only a manager would know.

By using templates and setting guardrails, you take the guesswork out of scheduling and make it easier to stay consistent week after week.

Section 3

Prevent Overtime and Stop Costly Early Clock-Ins



Even if your schedule looks good on paper, things can quickly go off track when employees show up too early or work longer than planned. These extra minutes—and especially unplanned overtime—can quietly eat away at your profits.

The Real Cost of Overtime and Early Clock-Ins

Overtime pay usually kicks in after 40 hours a week, and it's often paid at 1.5x the regular rate. That means just a few extra hours can really add up, especially if it happens with multiple team members.

Early clock-ins are another hidden cost. If someone clocks in 15–20 minutes early a few times a week, that adds up to hours of unneeded labor over the month.



💡 **Quick Stat:** One early clock-in per day can add over 5 hours of unplanned labor time per employee, per month.

Checklist: Keep Overtime and Early Clock-Ins in Check

Use this weekly routine to catch issues before they get expensive:

- ✓ **Set daily and weekly hour limits for each employee**
- ✓ **Check for overtime risk before publishing the schedule**
- ✓ **Review last week's timecards for early clock-ins**
- ✓ **Remind staff of clock-in policies (e.g. no earlier than 10 minutes before shift)**
- ✓ **Approve any extra time before it's worked—not after**

When to Use Software

Scheduling and time tracking software can make a big difference here. It can:

- **Automatically block early clock-ins**
- **Alert you when someone is close to hitting overtime**
- **Show real-time labor costs so you can adjust on the fly**

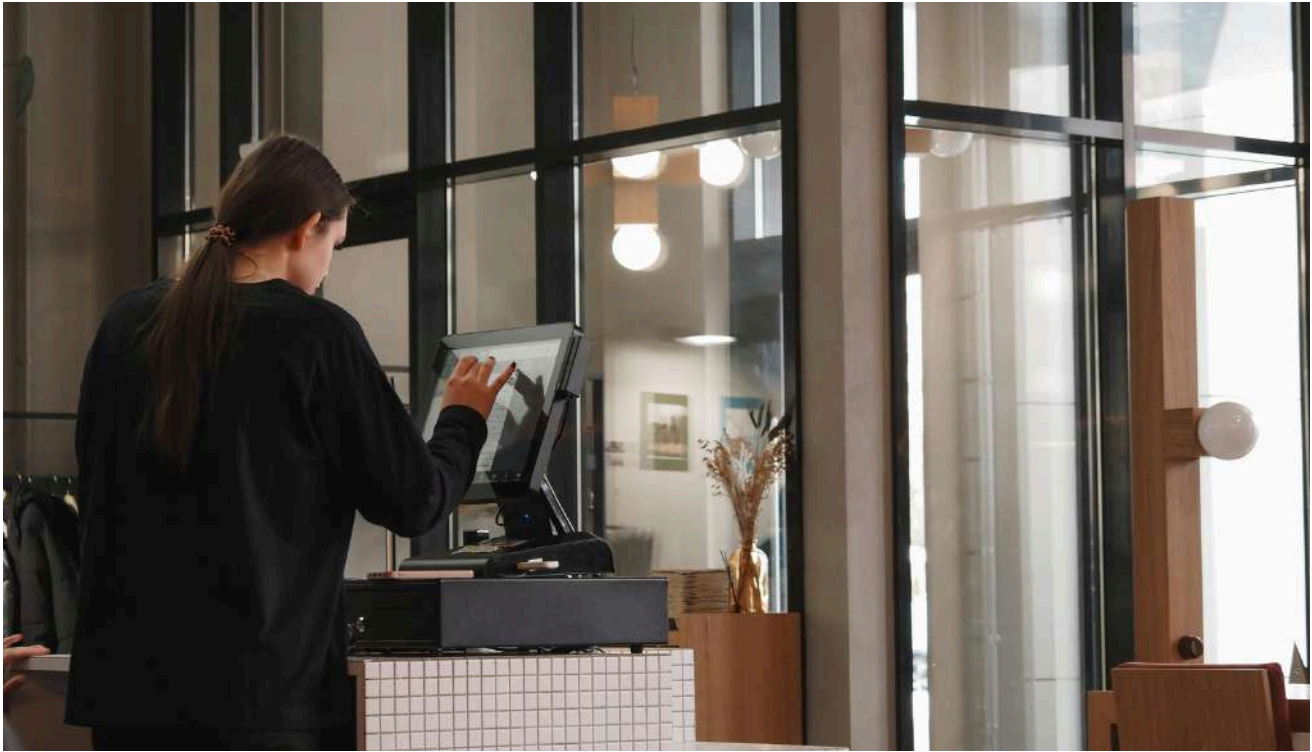
This kind of automation helps you catch problems before they show up on payroll.

Why This Matters

- **Cumulative Effect:** Even a 5–10 minute early clock-in per shift can lead to an additional 7–10 hours per employee each month.
- **Financial Impact:** Assuming an average wage of \$15/hour, these extra hours can result in unplanned labor costs of \$100–\$150 per employee monthly.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Monitoring and managing clock-in times can help maintain labor budgets and improve overall operational efficiency.

Section 4

Time-Off Requests and Shift Swaps



Last-minute callouts, unapproved swaps, or double-booked vacations can turn even the best-looking schedule into a stressful mess. But most of the time, the issue isn't that employees are trying to cause problems—it's that the process for handling time-off and swaps is unclear or inconsistent.

Why This Matters

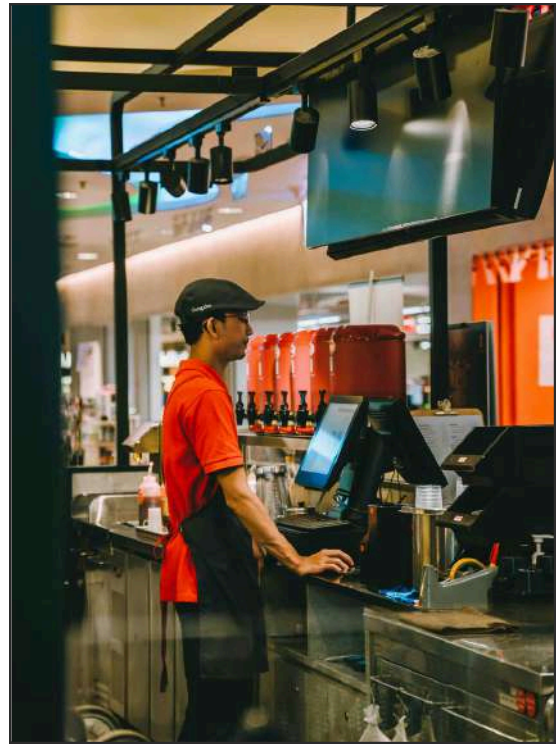
When employees don't know how to request time off—or don't trust the system—they often just don't show up or swap shifts without telling a manager. That leads to short staffing, missed breaks, and burned-out team members picking up the slack.

 **Data Point:** Restaurants with clear scheduling policies see up to 40% fewer no-shows and callouts.

Checklist: Create a Clear Time-Off and Shift Swap Process

Set up and communicate a simple set of rules your team can follow:

- ✓ **Set a clear deadline for time-off requests (e.g. 10 days before the schedule is posted)**
- ✓ **Require all shift swaps to be manager-approved**
- ✓ **Keep a shared time-off calendar to avoid double-booking**
- ✓ **Confirm all changes in writing (email, text, or app)**
- ✓ **Post the schedule at least 7 days in advance**



When Software Helps—but Isn't Required

You don't need software to manage this well—but it definitely helps. Tools that let staff submit time-off and swap requests digitally keep everything in one place. No more sticky notes, texts, or missed messages.

If you're already feeling overwhelmed managing these changes by hand, switching to a scheduling platform with built-in communication tools can save a lot of back-and-forth and reduce scheduling errors.

Keep It Consistent

Whatever system you choose—manual or digital—the key is to be consistent. When your team knows the rules and trusts the process, they're more likely to follow it. That leads to fewer surprises for you and smoother operations overall.

Section 5

Approve the Schedule with a Manager's 5-Minute Review



Once you've built your schedule, don't rush to post it right away. A quick review can catch costly mistakes before they turn into real problems. Think of this step like proofreading a menu—you wouldn't send one to print without double-checking it, right?


Why This Step Matters

Even a solid schedule can fall apart if you forget to account for things like:

- **Overlapping time-off**
- **Scheduling someone two shifts in a row**
- **Labor costs going over budget**

A short review gives you one last chance to make sure the schedule is fair, efficient, and legal.



 **Quick Stat:** Restaurants that do a pre-schedule review cut last-minute shift changes by 50%.

Checklist: Do a Final Review Before Publishing

Use this quick checklist to double-check your schedule each week:

- ☒ **Are all roles covered for every shift (FOH/BOH)?**
- ☒ **Did you honor approved time-off requests?**
- ☒ **Are any employees working more than 6 days in a row?**
- ☒ **Are scheduled hours staying within labor budget?**
- ☒ **Did you avoid back-to-back close/open shifts (a.k.a. clopens)?**

- ☒ **Are meal and rest breaks clearly planned into longer shifts?**

Before finalizing, it helps to get input from team leads or assistant managers. They may spot things you missed, like a training need or a staff conflict. Plus, it builds trust when they feel part of the process.

Taking just 5 extra minutes to review your schedule can save you from hours of stress later—and it shows your team that you're paying attention.

Use Software for a Real-Time Labor Snapshot (When Needed)

If you're using scheduling software, this is where it really shines. You can:

- View projected labor % in real-time
- Spot gaps or double-coverage at a glance
- See warnings for compliance issues like missed breaks or back-to-back shifts

Section 6

Labor Law Compliance



Scheduling isn't just about covering shifts—it's also about following the law. From required breaks to how far in advance schedules need to be posted, labor laws are strict—and violating them can cost your restaurant real money.

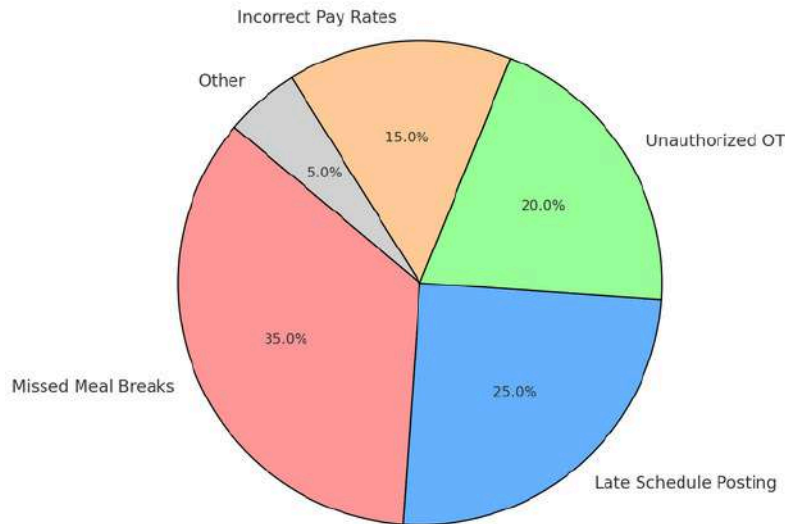
Why Compliance Matters

Some states now require restaurants to:

- Provide schedules at least 7 days in advance (predictive scheduling laws)
- Include meal and rest breaks depending on shift length
- Pay penalties when these rules aren't followed

Even if your intentions are good, mistakes like forgetting to schedule a break or changing a shift last-minute without notice can result in fines or extra pay requirements.

⚠ Example: In California, missing a meal break can result in 1 extra hour of pay per violation—per employee.



Labor laws can change quickly, especially at the local level. Keep a simple compliance checklist on hand and revisit it regularly. When in doubt, check your state or city's labor department website or speak with a legal advisor.

Checklist: Avoid Compliance Mistakes

Before publishing your schedule, check off the following:

- ☒ **Are all meal and rest breaks included based on shift lengths?**
- ☒ **Has the schedule been posted at least 7 days in advance (if required by law)?**
- ☒ **Are changes to the schedule being tracked and communicated properly?**
- ☒ **Are employees getting enough time off between closing and opening shifts?**
- ☒ **Are all minors (if applicable) scheduled according to labor restrictions?**

When to Use Software

This is where scheduling software can be a powerful safety net. Good platforms will:

- Warn you when breaks are missing
- Track schedule changes and confirmations
- Automatically flag violations before you publish

Software reduces the chance of errors and provides a record if you're ever audited.

Conclusion

Restaurant scheduling doesn't have to feel like guesswork, and it shouldn't eat up your entire day. With the right approach—and a few repeatable checklists—you can build schedules that save money, reduce stress, and keep your team happy.

Let's recap what we've covered:

- 1: Start with real data.** Plan your labor around dayparts, not hunches.
- 2: Use schedule templates** and simple rules to make the process faster and more consistent.
- 3: Keep an eye on early clock-ins** and overtime before they drain your labor budget.
- 4: Set clear rules for time-off and shift swaps** so you're not scrambling at the last minute.
- 5: Take 5 minutes to review the schedule** before posting—it prevents bigger problems later.
- 6: Know your labor laws** and follow them. A small mistake can turn into a big fine.

You don't need to be perfect. You just need a process—and a way to stick to it.

If you're still doing everything manually and it's taking too much of your time, it might be worth looking into scheduling tools that automate the boring stuff—so you can focus on running your business.

You've now got the tools and checklists to make scheduling easier and more effective—every single week.

With Altametrics, your scheduling isn't just solid, it's unstoppable, turning a daily grind into a strategic edge that saves time, cuts costs, and keeps your team and guests happy.

You've built a system through these chapters, and now you've seen how it scales with tools that match your hustle, from solo spots to sprawling chains. Busy days won't break you; they'll prove your control.

Ready to test it?

Book A Free Demo!

