Scheduling Automation at Pathology Associates Medical Lab (PAML)

Optimize Staffing, Boost Employee Morale & Simplify Complex Scheduling
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The Business Challenge at PAML

Faced with common scheduling challenges that limited growth and overburdened supervisors, Pathology Associates Medical Laboratories, LLC, (PAML) decided to look for a scheduling solution to solve their problems.

Like many complex laboratory systems, PAML was spending inordinate amounts of time creating and maintaining employee work schedules. With requests being submitted in different ways (email, fax and courier mail) and then manually entered into a spreadsheet, things were being overlooked and lost, creating an employee morale problem. In addition, and in the worst-case situations, there were service failures, when scheduling mistakes led to no phlebotomist showing up at a draw site.

“Supervisors are trained in a lot of aspects of their job, but I’ve never seen anybody sit down and officially train supervisors on how to schedule. So what you see out there is people just making it up.”

Rosalee Allan, Chief Operating Officer, PAML

PAML Facts

- Full-service reference laboratory
- Spokane, WA headquarters
- Founded in 1957
- Dozens of service centers across the Inland Northwest
- Leadership through innovative partnerships
- Instituted Six Sigma—rigorous quality improvement program
- Founding member of PacLab Network Laboratories
Quantifiable Results

StaffReady Scheduling brought efficiency, productivity and accountability to PAML staff schedules.

Three years after implementing cloud-based StaffReady Scheduling, the amount of staff time needed to manipulate and maintain the schedule has dropped dramatically—by 162 hours a year. At the same time, it has become much easier to track which employees are edging close to overtime, so much so that the average number of overtime hours has dropped from 81 per pay period to 53. In addition, employees are able to better manage their PTO requests.

✓ Employee morale noticeably higher
✓ Reduction in schedule-building time
✓ Thousands of dollars in overtime savings
✓ 95% reduction in scheduling-related phone calls
✓ Elimination of paper-based leave requests

“There’s only so far you can take Excel. And if a piece of mail gets lost, if a fax gets overlooked, if an e-mail is read but not acted on, that really did become a morale problem. StaffReady Scheduling is a system with little opportunity for error, especially with PTO requests; there are fewer misunderstandings.”

Matt Swanson, Patient Services Center Manager, PAML
The Scheduling Experience at PAML

What may appear to be the simple task of scheduling resources becomes increasingly difficult without the right solution in place in an ever-changing laboratory environment. Unfortunately, managers and supervisors are often called on to create and maintain enormous, constantly-shifting schedules with little in the way of preparation.

“Supervisors are trained in a lot of aspects of their job, but I’ve never seen anybody sit down and officially train supervisors on how to schedule,” says Rosalee Allan, Chief Operating Officer. “So, what you see out there is people just making it up.”

If you’re wondering why this seems hard, you’ve never looked at an outdated Excel spreadsheet and tried to figure out which of your multi-site laboratory’s five employees named Linda has been accidentally scheduled to work at two different locations on the same morning. You’ve also probably never been on the receiving end of a phone call from a draw site that starts with, “We’ve been open for 15 minutes now. Where’s my phlebotomist?” –Matt Swanson has. That’s why he, a patient services center manager for PAML, spent years looking for scheduling software designed to meet the needs of a laboratory.

Like most people who find themselves in the position of coordinating schedules for a large number of people, Swanson and the other members of his staff who handle scheduling, originally relied on a spreadsheet program not designed for the purpose. “There’s only so far you can take Excel.”
Handling requests for paid time off was also a major issue, in part because employees submitted them in haphazard fashion. “If a piece of mail gets lost, if a fax gets overlooked, if an e-mail is read but not acted on, that really did become a morale problem,” he says. “StaffReady Scheduling is a system with little opportunity for error, especially with PTO requests; there are fewer misunderstandings.”

In addition, some supervisors tended to rely on schedule printouts rather than the latest, electronic version. Swanson remembers, “If the supervisor got sick, we would have pretty much been dead in the water, because most of the schedule resided in his or her head, and what was left on paper was minimal and typically out of date.”

And, in the worst-case situations, “we did have some service failures,” he says, when scheduling mistakes led to no phlebotomist showing up at a draw site. “If you’ve ever gone without your cup of coffee in the morning, and you come in for a fasting lab test, and someone’s not there to serve you, that’s a real negative,” he points out ruefully. “That filters back to our clients, and that doesn’t do us any good.”
The StaffReady Difference

PAML embraced StaffReady Scheduling as a cloud-based software. They saw significant improvement in staff morale. They were able to optimize staffing levels with its smart scheduling capabilities.

StaffReady software requires no IT staff or additional hardware.

Every employee can view the schedule and submit vacation requests and shift change requests to their supervisors—even from home—via a web browser on any device, from desktop to tablet to smart phone.

Supervisors review the schedule and publish new schedules to the web. They also approve or deny requests, add and remove employees, or update shifts as employees call in sick.

StaffReady Scheduling users at PAML say that it has resulted in not only fewer headaches for supervisors but also better patient service, higher employee morale, and thousands of dollars in overtime savings.
About StaffReady Scheduling

StaffReady Scheduling is a smart, fully transparent online scheduling solution that enables convenient web access via desktop, tablet or smart phone for all managers and staff.

StaffReady Scheduling is supported by StaffReady, a privately-held software company noted for being one of the first to market in 2002 with cloud-based solutions for the healthcare industry.

StaffReady Scheduling can be customized to a large variety of medical environments and staffing scenarios. The approach is not “one size fits all,” rather a commitment to understanding each customer’s unique needs during the setup process, and then tailoring the software to fit those needs.

It is especially powerful for ancillary and clinical departments within medical institutions where unique scheduling requirements preclude the use of generic scheduling solutions.

Contact our Sales Team to learn more about how StaffReady Scheduling can help your team boost employee morale, optimize staffing levels, and transform complex scheduling tasks from a frustrating, sometimes political process, to open, transparent ones.

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