

Scheduling During Times of Disruption

Flexing the workforce while keeping employees safe and engaged

Shifting production requirements, fluctuations in labor availability, and enhanced health and safety procedures. These are just a few of the challenges that manufacturing organizations are facing as they continue to manage the complexity of workforce planning during these uncertain times.

During times of disruption, manufacturing operations must pivot and may have to work with a smaller than usual talent pool. Employees may be working longer shifts and, in some cases, working several consecutive days, leading to employee fatigue or burnout, which can lead to reduced productivity and to added costs. In fact, according to the National Safety Council, a recent study states that fatigued worker productivity costs employers \$1,200 to \$3,100 per employee annually.¹ And it's not just the financial impact that employers need to worry about when it comes to safety. A recent study, commissioned by UKG™ (Ultimate Kronos Group) shows 75% of employees trust their employer to create a physically safe and healthy work environment. To keep employees safe and reduce the risk of fatigue or burnout, it's important to closely monitor schedules, provide breaks, and pay attention to hours worked.

With today's complex demands, existing labor scheduling processes are often inadequate – and can have negative impacts on productivity, compliance, and employee engagement. It's important for manufacturers to adopt digital scheduling tools that not only comply with new – and constantly changing – health and safety requirements, but that also support employees in their efforts to manage work and life responsibilities, leading to a more engaged workforce.

Scheduling technology enables employees to manage work-life balance and feel safe at work – while keeping operations running.

The manufacturing work environment – production or assembly lines and other areas in busy plants – does not easily lend itself to the concept of social distancing. At times, workers may have to come in close contact with one another, which could contribute to potential exposure and unexpected absences. Three scheduling strategies manufacturers should consider to ensure shift coverage to keep operations running include:

1. Adjusting employee shift schedules
2. Cohorting (or grouping together) workers
3. Shift swapping



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Adjusting employee shift schedules

Manufacturing workers often work close to one another on the production line, but they may also be near one another at other times, such as when entering the facility, clocking in or out, having meals and taking breaks, or being in the locker/changing rooms. Optimize employee schedules to promote social distancing requirements and provide additional time for workers to follow health guidelines. For example, consider staggering work shift start and end times and breaks.



Cohorting (or grouping together) workers

Ensuring that groups of workers are always assigned to the same shifts with the same coworkers can increase the effectiveness of the plant's normal shift schedules. Cohorting may reduce the spread of illness by minimizing the number of individuals who come in close contact with each other during the course of a week. Another benefit of cohorting? It helps simplify contact tracing procedures should an employee fall ill.



Shift swapping

Empower employees with the flexibility they need when it comes to time away from work. The ability to swap shifts on their own not only promotes employee well-being but also helps prevent unexpected absences, enabling manufacturers to keep operations running. Using the device of their choice, employees can request a shift swap with another qualified employee and get a response in a matter of moments, allowing them the time they need to care for family or themselves.

Enable your employees to feel safer and more supported

Transparent scheduling methods that maximize safety and offer mobile options are fundamental. You need scheduling processes that can help you track teams, mitigate exposure risks, and give employees visibility into when and where they're needed.

Manufacturers need tools that help them efficiently utilize the workforce they have as safely as possible. With an automated scheduling solution from UKG, manufacturers are more resilient, compliant, and efficient while employees feel safer and more supported.

¹ National Safety Council. *Fatigue – You're More Than Just Tired*, <https://www.nsc.org/workplace/safety-topics/fatigue/fatigue-home>

² UKG (Ultimate Kronos Group), *Employees Set High Bar: Workplace Safety, Transparent Communication, Contact Tracing Nonnegotiable, Find Kronos Surveys* (August 5, 2020), found at <https://www.kronos.com/about-us/newsroom/employees-set-high-bar-workplace-safety-transparent-communication-and-contact-tracing-non-negotiable-find-kronos-surveys>.