

PULP-FREE HR: PUT DOWN THE SPREADSHEET

> Pens, paper, file folders, spreadsheets. For years, these were the “high-tech” tools Matlack Florist, in West Chester, Pa., relied on for human resources tasks — scheduling workdays and time off (and, inevitably, rescheduling both), taking personnel notes on training and reviews, documenting emergency contact information, tracking who had store keys ... the list goes on.

“There’s so much information to keep track of with any given employee,” said Kate Delaney, director of operations. “We have some employees who have been with us for 20 years or more. That’s a lot of paper.”

Look Ma, No Paper

Starting in January, Delaney traded at least some of that paper for a new system, **BambooHR** (bamboohr.com), an online HR information system for small- and medium-sized businesses. (Matlack has 30 part- and full-time employees.) Delaney chose the system because she liked the combination of management and self-service options. Right away, for instance, she asked employees to update their emergency contacts directly; other tasks Delaney manages herself.

Another perk: Delaney has started using the system to automatically upload job postings and then manage candidate information (resumes, rankings, interview notes, etc.). “When you hire a person, all the information you gathered on them [when they were a candidate] automatically integrates into their new employee file,” she said. The system also makes it “much easier” to onboard new employees, with applications to capture signatures and collect forms (direct deposit, I-9, W-4, etc.).

Thanks to the new system, which also has custom tabs set up for driver information (and alerts when licenses are set to expire), Delaney also introduced a new paid time-off policy for her part-time workers. “Employees can log on anytime and see where they are, how much leave they’ve taken or accrued,” in real time, she said. “It’s streamlined and easy.”

Right on Schedule

To handle scheduling, Delaney likes another suite of tools through **When I Work** (wheniwork.com). Like BambooHR (and other services, see box), When I Work integrates fully with Google; Matlack managers input their departments’ schedules and

then employees receive updates according to their own preferences (email, text, etc.).

“It also sends notifications if a shift is open and people can ask for time off,” directly through the system, Delaney said.

Skip Paal, AAF, president of the Rutland Beard Floral Group, headquartered in Baltimore, faced a familiar schedule-related problem in the floral industry: creeping payroll costs and employees who clocked in at 8:15 a.m. (sometimes to work and sometimes to get coffee and catch up with co-workers) even though they were scheduled to start at 9 a.m.

Those minutes add up — by Paal’s estimate, to the tune of about \$10,000 a year. (Rutland Beard has 92 full- and part-time employees and eight locations.) Starting in January, Paal worked with managers to first educate employees about what the schedule means and how many hours they’re working. He also started using **Schedule-My-Employees.com**, which has helped streamline scheduling and empowered managers to more accurately estimate their weekly payroll costs and hit their target numbers. (Managers can see individual pay grades on the schedule; other employees do not.) So far this year, payroll costs are down 14 percent.

“[The program] shows a running total for each day and each employee,” Paal said. “[Now], if we have a day with the store running efficiently on 32 hours of payroll, and then the next day we have 45 hours of payroll, I can ask questions: ‘Why do you need the extra hours that day?’ There’s often a perfectly good reason — a big event or a lot of product to process — but it’s a great tracking tool.”

Like Delaney, Paal and his team generally relied on low-tech tools before, and the system has pushed them forward and improved profitability.

“We wanted to put accountability on our mid-level managers [to hit some of these payroll numbers], and this program helps us align all our team with our goals,” he said. 🌿

Mary Westbrook, Floral Management’s contributing editor, stepped in to write Renato Sogueco’s Plugged In column this month, so he could focus on his cover story. Renato and his team of tech contributors will be back next month. mwestbrook@safnow.org

PROGRAMS TO TRY

- **Bamboo HR**
bamboohr.com
Cost: Contact for pricing.
Standout Feature: Store employee data securely in one location. Managed and self-service tasks available.
- **Schedule-My-Employees.com**
Cost: Free. Standout Feature: Schedules are available in manager format that includes cost information.
- **When I Work**
wheniwork.com
Cost: Starting at \$29/month for companies with up to 20 employees
Standout Feature: Communicate schedule changes instantly through email, text, and smartphone apps.

While we didn’t talk to florists using the following tools, they’ve received good reviews in the tech world and have similar applications:

- **theEMPLOYEEapp**
thecommsapp.com
Pushes important company info straight to phones so it’s useful for employees (including drivers) on the go. Contact for pricing.
- **Intellinote**
intellinote.net
Keep and share notes and upload resumes to the cloud, store notes around each candidate, and have active discussions. Contact for pricing; free beta testing promos available at press time.
- **ReadySetWork**
readysetwork.com
Electronically schedule employees, track hours, and fill open shifts. Pricing starts at \$1.50/month per employee for businesses with up to 50 employees.