



AUTOMATE SHIFT BIDDING TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY, TRANSPARENCY AND MORALE

Employee scheduling is a challenge for any organization, especially public safety agencies, which must balance 24/7/365 demands with union rules, labor compliance guidelines, common workplace practices and employee safety and fatigue concerns. Manual processes are slow, labor-intensive and non-transparent, and they leave too much room for error.

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Employees today expect to engage and interact with technologies that are familiar and function like those outside the workplace, but traditionally, most public safety agencies have used low-tech or manual shift-bidding processes.

Nowhere is this more true than shift bidding, the process where employees bid to set their regular schedules and shifts, bid for overtime opportunities or special events and request the vacation/paid time off days they want based on their seniority and date preferences.

WHY IMPARTIAL SHIFT BIDDING MATTERS

For those in charge, handling shift bidding in the most fair, transparent and equitable manner is necessary to maintain employee engagement and high morale. As soon as employees think they've detected favoritism or unfair bias in awarding shift bids to certain employees – even if the errors are minor and unintentional – critical trust in the chain of command is diminished.

When this happens, the fallout rains down throughout the entire agency. Employees who lose faith in their supervisors' even-handedness are less motivated to perform and thus less effective on the job. Perceived favoritism can also fracture the cohesiveness of the team, which can be deadly in a public safety setting, where everyone in the workforce must be able to count on each other without question, especially in life-or-death situations.

WHY MANUAL SHIFT BIDDING IS RISKY

Employees today expect to engage and interact with technologies that are familiar and function like those outside the workplace, but traditionally, most public safety agencies have used low-tech or manual shift-bidding processes. Some make endless phone calls or start email exchanges. Others pass around a paper calendar asking officers to mark their shift bids for later review by management.

Unfortunately, manual shift bidding systems can go wrong in many ways for public safety agencies. This kind of ad hoc process lacks a centralized, automated way to quickly collect, correlate and prioritize the bids in compliance with agency regulations and union rules. Rosters fraught with error can also lead to excess downstream overtime and inadequate coverage.

- First, employee input is easy to lose in manual systems, especially if the requests are paper-based.
- Second, manual shift bidding systems can allow staff members to see each other's bids. Given that humans rarely agree on principles of entitlement (even in seniority-based systems), sharing who wants what is a sure way to fuel discontent.
- Third, manual shift-bidding systems force those in charge to know and apply a lot of relevant requirements, such as seniority details, special skills and certifications, (e.g., who is best suited to fill in for the K9 officer, a school resource officer or hazmat specialist), as well as complex labor laws, safety regulations, union agreements and other defining conditions to the shift bids.

This last point is a recipe for disaster. "To err is human," as the old saying goes, and no one person can retain all of the rules pertaining to fair shift bidding management and apply them without error 100 percent of the time.

Meanwhile, schedulers and administrators who do display a high degree of competence in managing shift bidding are likely to be promoted eventually to another position, bringing in new individuals who must master the shift bidding process.

This automated solution is efficient, requiring far less human intervention and monitoring than its manual alternatives, and the results are impartial and trustworthy, providing employees with confidence that everyone is treated fairly. Additionally, all the agency's vital staffing data is backed up securely by Kronos in the cloud as a fail-safe.

Add the fact that manual shift bidding systems are labor-intensive and slow – often fueling low morale by keeping employees waiting for weeks to learn their shift assignments or to see if their vacations and time off requests were approved – and there is simply no upside to using manual shift bidding.

HOW AUTOMATED SHIFT BIDDING SOLVES PROBLEMS

In contrast to manual shift management, automated shift bidding systems take the risks out of this process for public safety agencies. An automated shift bidding system uses rules-based engine technology to analyze and rank all shift bids according to compliance with departmental rules. For instance, if a staffer or scheduler ranks shift bids based on employee seniority, requirements or preferences, the rules-based engine will provide shift bidding recommendations that meet these conditions.

The same is true with assessing shift or vacation bids in line with applicable union agreements and Fair Labor Standards Act conditions. To the rules-based engine, these are just more filters to be applied to the bid analysis process – an automated process that is faster, more transparent, less labor-intensive and more resistant to errors than any manual alternative.

As long as the rules-based engine has been properly configured to the agency's shift bidding procedures, it will generate results that are fair to everyone. More importantly, employees know that the shift bidding system is fair, enhancing their trust in the process.

KRONOS WORKFORCE TELESTAFF BIDDING

For over 40 years, **Kronos** has served public safety agencies with scheduling and workforce management technologies. Now, the **Kronos Workforce TeleStaff Bidding Module** can streamline the entire shift bidding process for these agencies, reducing administrative work flows while enhancing system flexibility and decision-making fairness.

Here's how it works: After the rules are loaded into the Workforce TeleStaff Bidding Module, employees file their vacation or shift bids electronically using a web-based interface that can be accessed by computer, tablet or smartphone. These bids are then analyzed and ranked according to rules set by the agency. This results in shift bidding decisions that are fair, that meet compliance rules and that provide adequate coverage models to meet citizen safety demands.

The Workforce TeleStaff Bidding web portal makes it easy for officers to track the progress of their bids online. Agency leaders ultimately choose when to finalize and award bids, and they can work quickly and communicate results to department computers, smartphones and tablets. Providing insight into the process, as well as faster results, gives employees more control over their schedules, encouraging greater satisfaction and confidence with the bidding process.

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The morale benefits are obvious: Even if they don’t necessarily like some of the shifts they receive, employees know that there was no favoritism or bias in the shift selection process. This is what automated bidding delivers that manual systems cannot.

AUTOMATED SHIFT BIDDING IN ACTION

The Kronos Workforce TeleStaff Bidding module has been implemented at the Schaumburg Police Department and the Elgin Fire Department, both in Illinois, as well as the Oakland County Sheriff’s Office in Michigan – all with impressive results.

All three agencies relied on labor-intensive, error-prone manual shift bidding systems before adopting Workforce TeleStaff Bidding. Managers in each agency spent weeks collecting, analyzing and assigning bids, and the lack of transparency gave rise to fears that shifts weren’t being assigned equitably.

For instance, command staff in the Schaumburg Police Department would spend four months each year collecting shift bids from officers on a single paper-based calendar. Staff would then spend an average of 30 hours hand-entering this data into a spreadsheet and onto paper schedules, a laborious process that SPD officers distrusted for being potentially unfair and open to mistakes.

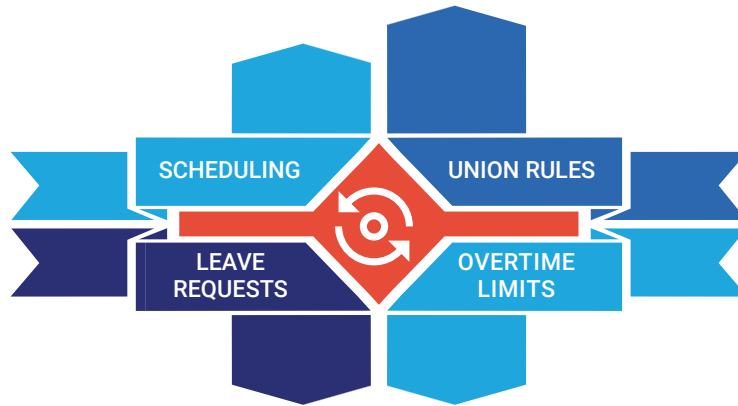
When Schaumburg PD deployed Workforce TeleStaff Bidding, everything changed. The streamlined automated shift bidding process was fast and fair, delivering rapid results that everyone could trust.

“By not having to manually enter officer assignments and vacation picks, we save a considerable amount of work hours,” said Lt. Michael Smith. “Also, by having the vacation picks date- and time-stamped, there can be no issue about an officer picking out of order of seniority.”

The Elgin Fire Department found that manual shift bidding required command staff to make up to 7,000 calls annually to fill overtime shifts, and employees who missed these calls were disappointed and unhappy with the system. Vacation bidding also took a month to complete.

With Workforce TeleStaff Bidding in place, Elgin FD has cut each shift commander’s overtime management duties from four hours daily to under an hour. The calls to alert firefighters to available shifts are now made by an automated system designed to minimize missed opportunities, remedying the shortcomings of the old manual system. Vacation assignments using automation are likewise a breeze.

“Our bidding management time is minimized with Workforce TeleStaff doing most of the work,” said Lt. Todd Wilmington. “Bidding took 20 to 30 hours of management time before and now takes half an hour.”



A customizable system helps your organization ensure the right person for the right job, every time.

Before they adopted Workforce TeleStaff Bidding, sergeants at the Oakland County Sheriff’s Office would spend hours every day calling deputies to offer overtime work, doing their best to comply with complex union rules and overtime limits. The sergeants’ efforts were tracked in paper notebooks – a siloed 19th-century process ill-suited for an interconnected 21st-century reality.

Workforce TeleStaff Bidding greatly improved the process for OCSO sergeants and officers. The sergeants were freed from pushing paper for duties more relevant to keeping the peace

and protecting citizens, and officers felt they could trust the process.

“The automation of scheduling, hiring overtime and approving leave requests with Workforce TeleStaff has saved our command officers a tremendous amount of time that can now be dedicated to crisis incident management, supervision of personnel and through review of reports,” said Capt. Curtis Childs. “Even with complex union rules for hiring overtime positions, we automated that process completely in all divisions.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

Automated shift bidding systems, such as Kronos’ Workforce TeleStaff Bidding Module, provide efficient, accurate and equitable shift bidding selections for public safety agencies. The ability to customize the system according to local rules and regulations ensures the right person for the right job at the right time. This enhances employee morale and trust in command staff, while streamlining the process and freeing those in charge for other, more important public safety duties.



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