

Harnessing AI for Enhanced Scheduling: A Case of Orquest



Source: Unsplash (2025)

Background

Human labour is a valuable resource for every company, and securing sufficient manpower is the key to unlocking service quality and many other factors such as cost efficiency and staff retention. This case explores how artificial intelligence (AI) can support businesses in optimizing workforce management and staff scheduling.

Orquest, a workforce management solution company, is using AI to create optimal schedules for multinational corporations such as McDonald's and ZARA (Raconteur, n.d.). By using advanced AI algorithms, Orquest analyses historic data from each store to forecast seasonal demand patterns and calculate the number of staff needed to cover peak hours while minimizing overstaffing during quieter periods (Retail Gazette, 2025). Mohammad Amireh, Senior Manager of Operations at McDonald's Bahrain, says the technology has been able to accurately predict the number of staff required for the day for over 90% of the time (Orquest, 2023).

For Orquest, smart scheduling isn't just about forecasting demand and staffing the right amount of people but also optimizing the use of every employee. By factoring in employee preferences and skills, the system assigns employees with the right skills for each task (Retail Gazette, 2025). Hence, maximizing operational efficiency and alleviating guest experience. On the other hand, Orquest empowers employees with self-service tools that allow them to easily enter their availability and change their schedule preference at any time (Hospitality Tech, 2024). As the system updates in real-time with each employee request, this dynamic scheduling approach offers a high level of flexibility, contributing to employee well-being and promoting retention (Raconteur, n.d.).

In addition, implementing a smart scheduling system can significantly reduce the time managers spend on repetitive administrative tasks, such as compiling roster schedules each week. According to Orquest (2023), the adoption of AI scheduling has enabled McDonald's Bahrain to save up to 3.5 hours in staff schedule preparation every week. As a result, managers can have more time focusing on other parts of their job that are more enjoyable for them.

Challenges

While AI scheduling requires a certain level of digital literacy among managers to maximize the effectiveness of the system, managers must regularly input high-quality data and remain familiar with AI tools (Forbes, 2024). Moreover, while algorithms can optimize staffing based on data, they

lack the human touch needed to interpret nuances in employee behaviour and well-being. A good manager can sense when an employee is excelling, struggling, or newly skilled—insights that are not easily captured by data alone.

AI systems are still reliant on human input to reflect such contextual information. For instance, if employee A has shown noticeable improvement, employee B has gained a new qualification, or employee C is underperforming due to personal issues, these factors must be manually fed into the system. While AI can recommend ideal schedules based on existing data, managers still play a crucial role in reviewing and adjusting the final rosters to ensure fairness, empathy, and operational balance.

Discussion Questions

1. How does AI scheduling improve operational efficiency and employee satisfaction?
2. Beyond the system's inability to assess employee conditions like a human manager, what other potential challenges might arise from implementing AI scheduling?
3. How might AI-driven workforce management system evolve in the future to address current limitations?

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Keywords

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
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- Human Resource Management
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