

# Expert Healthcare Employee Scheduling:

A Blueprint for Success



**WorkforceHub.**  
powered by swipeclock



Healthcare employee scheduling has a profound impact on both patient care and employee well-being. And these two barometers of success generally rise and fall together. However, healthcare employee scheduling—which has never been easy—has become even more complicated since the pandemic upended the entire healthcare system.

Healthcare facilities must adapt to frequent changes in patient population, hybrid work schedules and nontraditional delivery models like telemedicine. In addition, widespread employee stress and burnout puts even more pressure on managers to get scheduling right.

## Here are common scheduling challenges:

- How do we manage teams for social distancing and still provide excellent patient care?
- How can schedules accommodate fluctuations in patient counts and employee absences?
- Who can work from home and how can we manage their schedules?
- Where can we improve labor allocation without compromising patient care?
- How does telehealth impact our scheduling practices?
- How can we support employee health and well-being?

Add these new challenges to the ones that have always affected the industry.

For example, healthcare entities have budget constraints not present in the private sector. For example, they can't raise their prices whenever costs increase due to pricing contracts with insurance providers. Skills gaps, labor shortages and employee burnout have always plagued the healthcare system—though the ongoing public health crisis has intensified them in many communities and industry sectors.

*Indeed, healthcare schedulers must balance multiple competing priorities when managing labor resources.*

This eBook is for scheduling managers in small to mid-size healthcare organizations who want to create effective employee schedules as efficiently as possible.

**First off, let's outline the goals of employee scheduling;**

- Ensure a high level of patient care
- Make the most efficient use of labor resources
- Maintain employee satisfaction and loyalty
- Comply with all [labor laws](#)

First, we will discuss how to do shift planning using scheduling software. Then we will discuss best practices for healthcare staff scheduling.



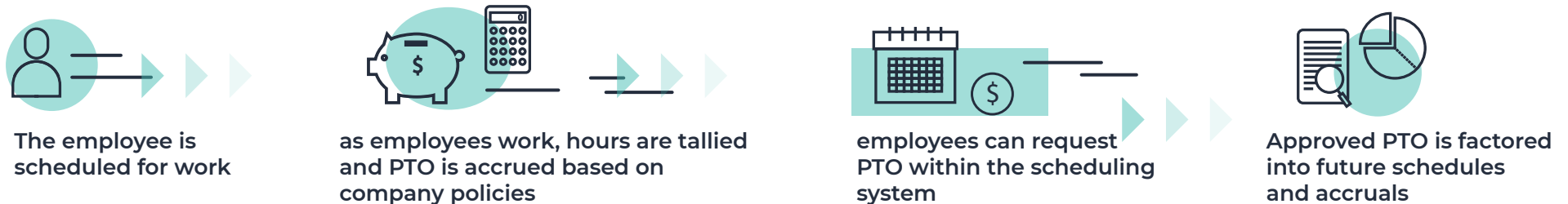
## How to use scheduling software

Unlike spreadsheets, scheduling software is built from the ground up for employee scheduling. As such, it can perform scheduling wizardry far beyond the abilities of spreadsheets or generic web-based calendars.

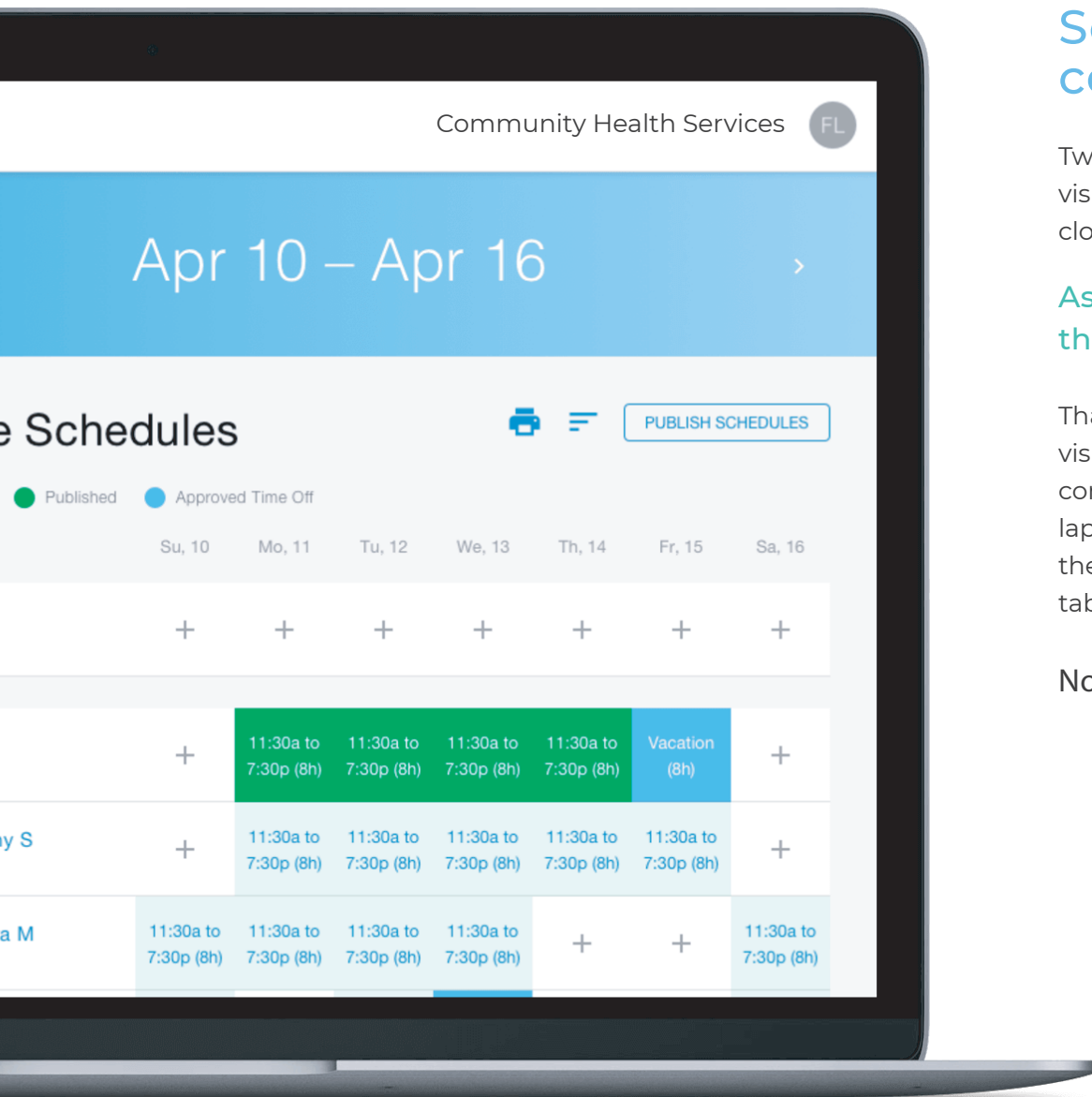
## Scheduling and time and attendance

**You can't separate scheduling from employee time and attendance**—they are two sides of the same coin. Employee scheduling solutions are most powerful when they integrate with or include employee timekeeping functions. As such, they are often created and sold as one product. This means that employee punches, timecards, and accruals all sync with the schedule builder.

### The timekeeping/scheduling process:



As we discuss various scheduling tools and functions, keep in mind the important relationship between scheduling, timekeeping and [PTO](#).



## Schedule visibility and communication

Two key benefits of specialized scheduling software are schedule visibility and ease of communication. Scheduling software is cloud-based.

As such, healthcare employee schedulers can access the software from any internet-enabled device.

That means managers, employees and admin have real time visibility into scheduling combined with a convenient way to communicate. They can access the scheduler from a desktop or laptop computer. With a companion mobile app, they can access the schedule and communication tools on a smartphone or tablet. Schedule visibility and communication are transformative.

Now, let's discuss how the software works.



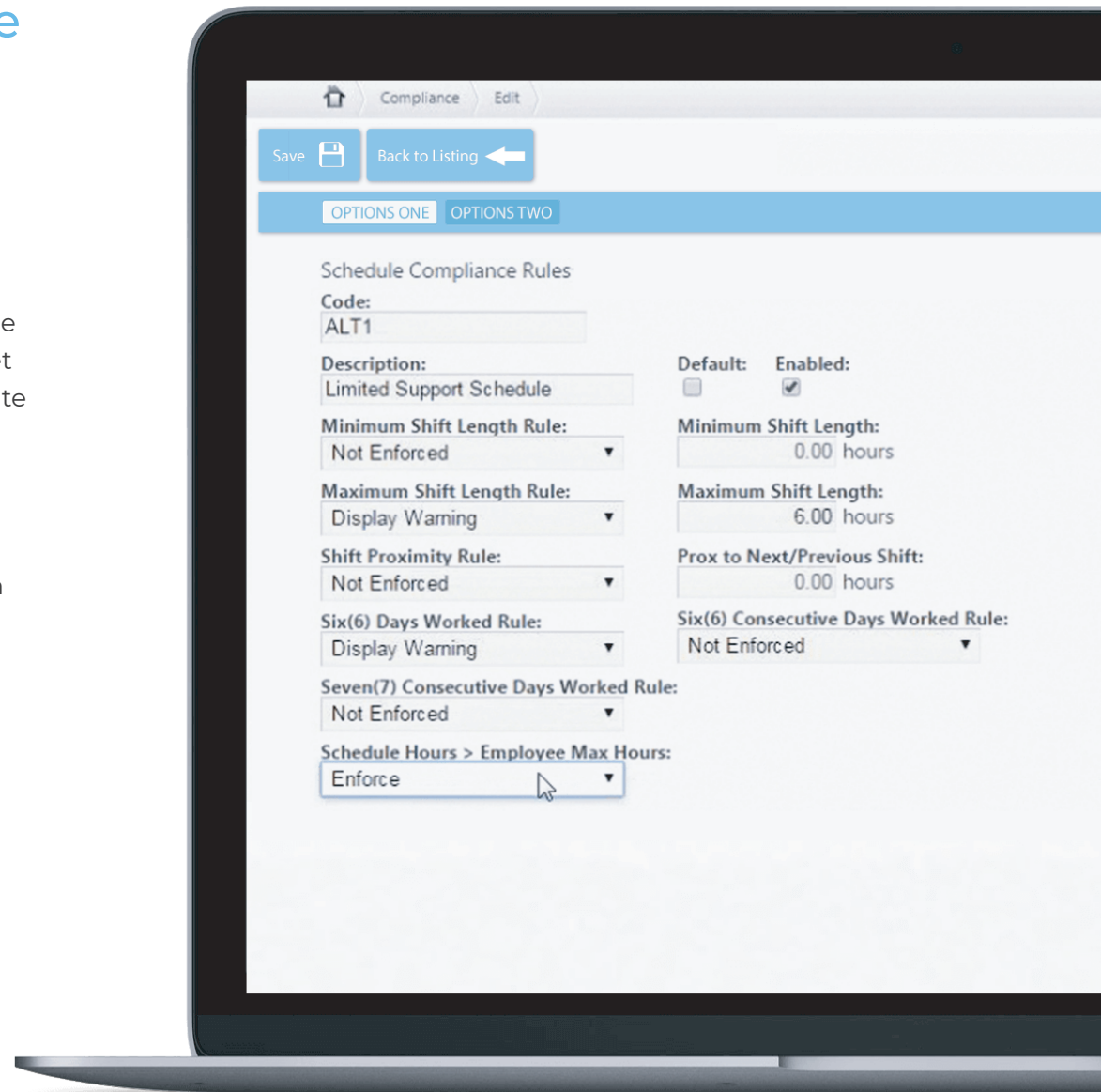
## How to use scheduling software

Scheduling products have a graphical interface that allow for a high degree of personalization. **You'll have a dashboard and interactive calendar where you will create your schedules.**

Color code employees, shifts, workgroups, job functions or locations.

Start by pulling employees into shifts on the calendar. Move the cursor to extend or decrease the time of a shift. Once you've set the schedule for a week or pay period, you can create a template for your master schedule. Then you can copy it forward from week to week. It may need some tweaking, but you'll have the basic framework in place and won't ever have to start from scratch. You can make as many templates as you need. For example, most healthcare schedulers have a template for each department, location, or job role.

**By using scheduling software, you can reduce the time it takes to create schedules by 80%!**

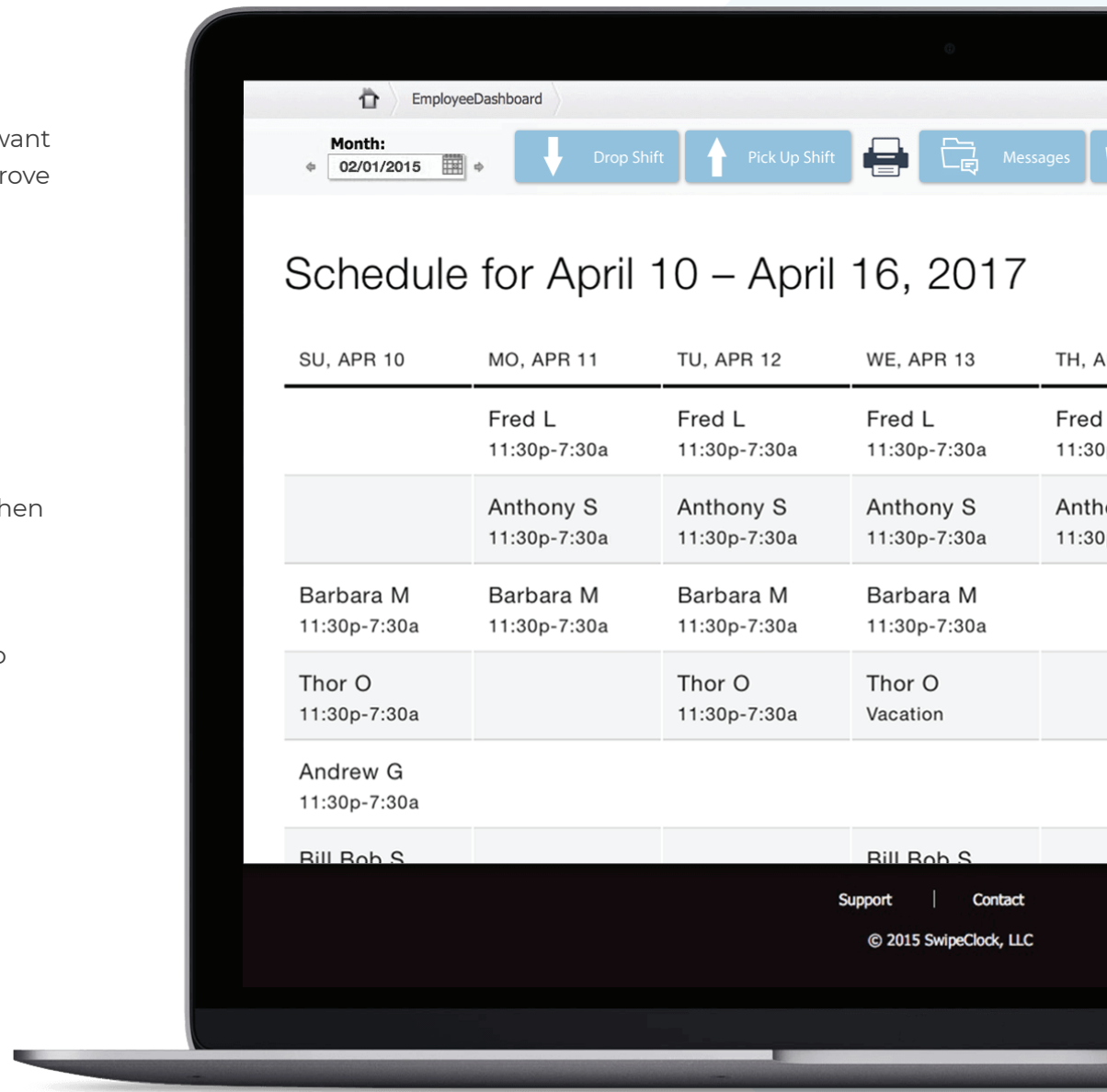


## Online shift trading

With centrally-managed shift trading, employees can post a shift when they have an unexpected conflict. Workers who want more hours can pick up additional shifts. Managers can approve or reject shift-change requests. Some teams may not need manager approval for shift changes as long as an employee can find a replacement.

## Understand employee preferences

Ideally, this should begin with the first interview. Find out when an employee is available and how many hours they want to work. Availability and shift preferences should be important factors in the hiring decisions. Unless there is a severe labor shortage in your area, you should be able to hire people who want a variety of schedules.





## Schedule enforcement

Some scheduling solutions, like WorkforceHUB from SwipeClock, have clock lockout.

### WorkforceHub

Managers can block employees from clocking in too early for their shift or clocking out too late after their shift has ended.

This prevents employees from working before or after their scheduled shift without permission. This is especially helpful for unsupervised teams.

Lunch lockout is a related function. Lunch lockout prevents an employee from clocking in before the authorized meal period is over. This helps employers comply with lunch break laws and ensure employees take needed breaks.

### The benefits of schedule enforcement:

- Prevent unplanned overtime
- Prevent hours padding
- Managers don't have to be schedule enforcers
- Allows managers to address punctuality problems in the early stages

### Tardy notification

Healthcare industry employees who are habitually late create problems that extend beyond their specific job role.

If they serve patients directly, their absence can delay a patient's medication schedule or other time-sensitive treatment requirements. In most situations, an employee who has already worked a long shift will have to cover until the late employee clocks in. Late punch alerts help managers identify and correct punctuality problems before they cause lasting damage.

Hospitals and care facilities must maintain mandated caregiver-patient ratios.

When scheduling software alerts a manager that an employee hasn't clocked in, the manager can take the appropriate action.



## Best Practices for Scheduling Healthcare Workers

### 1 Formalize and communicate time and attendance policies

Create and document rules surrounding hours and schedules in your employee handbook.

#### Address the following:

- How to clock in/out
- How to submit [timecards](#)
- How to request PTO
- How requests are prioritized when there is a conflict (first-come first-served, by seniority, etc.)
- What an employee should do if they can't work a scheduled shift
- What an employee should do if they start feeling sick during a shift
- Discipline policy for tardies and no-shows

### 2 Post schedules early

Make schedules available two weeks or more in advance. Your employees can arrange childcare, transportation, and schedule personal activities. You will have less absenteeism and tardiness.

### 3 Plan ahead for changes in scheduling needs

If you have an operational change coming up—perhaps your facility is closing a department temporarily—let employees know that their schedules will be affected.

### 4 Allow self-service shift trading

If you hire capable professionals, they can [trade shifts responsibly](#) within their job role. If an employee has an unexpected obligation, let them find a replacement. Healthcare professionals are less likely to miss a shift if they have some control over shift trading.

### 5 Confirm availability when hiring

When [interviewing candidates](#), find out what shifts they can work and how many hours they want. This sounds like a no-brainer. But healthcare hiring managers have a lot of balls to juggle including assessments, interviews, background checks and certification confirmation. Scheduling preferences can get lost in the shuffle. When evaluating competing candidates with similar qualifications, schedule preferences can tip the scale.

### 6 Clarify rules for schedulers

Healthcare facilities that care for COVID-19 patients have developed complex policies in an effort to ensure patient and employee safety. For example, schedules must allow for the donning and doffing of PPE, occupancy limits, and the prevention of cross-contamination of supplies—just to name a few. Identify and make updates to rules in a cloud-based document to ensure that all managers are following the same policies. As the pandemic continues to impact healthcare management, it has never been more important for everyone to be working off a system of record.



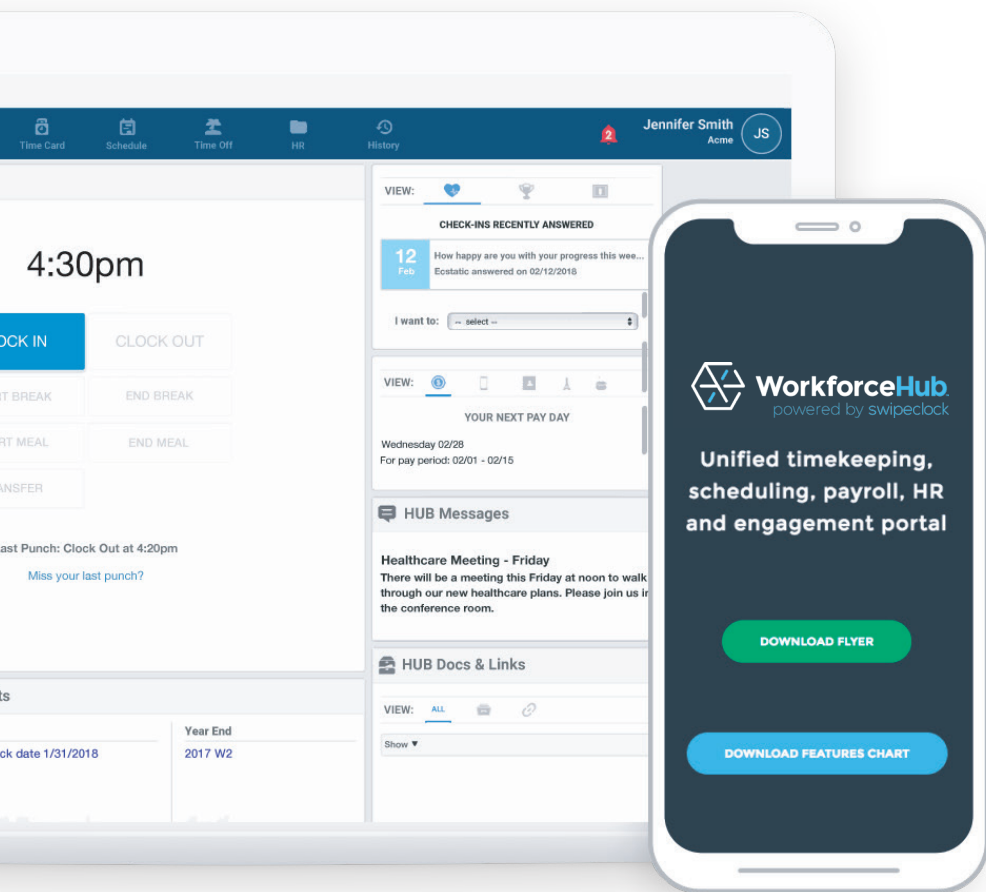
## Let's sum up the benefits of effective healthcare employee scheduling:

- Quality patient care
- Employee and visitor safety
- Increased employee satisfaction and retention
- Fewer coverage gaps
- Improved schedule adherence—reduced tardiness and fewer no shows
- Reduced unplanned overtime
- Streamlined compliance and recordkeeping (PBJ, ADA, FLSA, FMLA, state-specific overtime laws, union rules, etc.)
- Scalable, repeatable scheduling workflows





Powerful software for the unique challenges of healthcare employee scheduling



Swipeclock's WorkforceHub includes employee timekeeping and scheduling. WorkforceHub was designed specifically for the mission critical time and labor challenges of running small to mid-size organizations. WorkforceHub is intuitive, easy-to-use and quick to stand up.

For more information about employee scheduling, visit [workforcehub.com](https://workforcehub.com).