

# *A Day in the Life of a Store Manager Using a Digital Workplace*



workjam

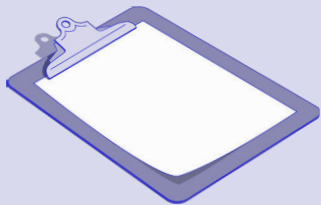


The changing retail landscape presents store managers with a number of challenges. Employees are looking for a more engaging experience at work, and customers want to interact with well-trained and well-informed associates. Instead of spending time coaching and

leading employees to better serve their customers, store managers are wasting an inordinate amount of time on administrative paperwork. Forced to go off the store floor into the back room to access the company intranet or post a memo on a corkboard in the lunch room,

store managers require more efficient and productive tools to run smooth operations. In many cases, especially in large department stores, store managers are forced to squander around to a quarter of their weekly hours doing administrative work, such as scheduling,

finding employees to cover last minute shifts, ensuring employees have read training materials, and printing and distributing corporate memos.



*Instead of spending those hours on the store floor leading their team of associates, store managers are dealing with:*

#### **Poor communication channels**

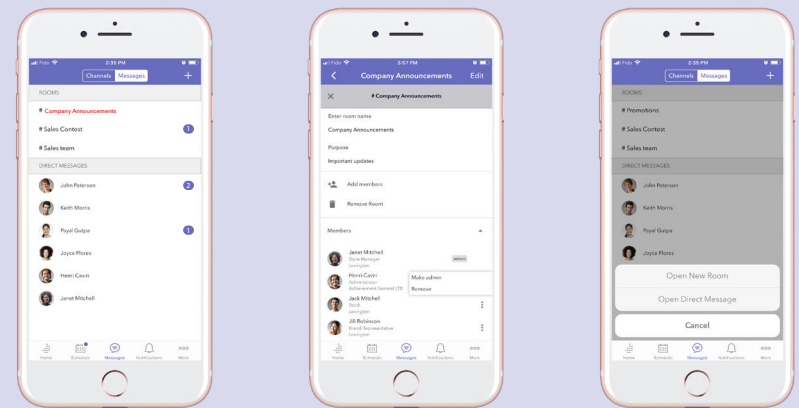
Perhaps the largest challenge facing store managers is that they lack the tools and processes to communicate effectively with employees and corporate. Email and company intranet are cumbersome and lack consistency, and paper-based communication is ineffective and slow. In today's business environment, **68% of companies communicate schedules to employees using physical charts.**<sup>1</sup>

#### **High employee turnover**

Employees want to work in a culture that engages them and makes them feel like part of a team. With **average retail industry turnover on the rise**, store managers spend excessive time hiring and training new employees instead of developing the ones they already have. **Seasonally adjusted turnover ranges from 60 to 100%.**<sup>2</sup>

#### **Ineffective company-wide training**

Watching a ten-year-old corporate intro video in a stuffy stock room hardly qualifies as engaging company training. Store managers require targeted and effective training materials – that are easy to disseminate – to feel confident their staff is ready to provide exceptional customer service. **Nearly 35% of retail employees feel disengaged with their work.**<sup>3</sup> If they had the right skills and training, they could apply their strengths in meaningful employment.



Faced with these overarching challenges, how can store managers coach employees and provide the kind of service today's retail customers expect in order to grow store revenues? The answer is simple: **store managers need to be able to communicate with employees from the moment they are hired, keeping them engaged from the get-go.** High engagement leads to lower turnover, giving store managers the time to focus

on training and developing their existing team members.

### ***But what does that look like in practice?***

To answer that question, we're going to follow Michael, a retail store manager, for a day. Michael's last employer was a large department store that didn't see the importance of giving store managers the tools they needed to successfully lead their teams.

Instead, Michael used many paper-based and manual communication tools that resulted in poor employee engagement and inconsistent customer experience.

By contrast, Michael's new employer emphasizes the value of managerial communication. They understand that in order to coach and engage hourly associates and improve customer experience, Michael needs to be able to easily

connect with employees and corporate while he's on the store floor.

Michael's new workplace utilizes a digital workplace platform with a mobile-driven approach, enabling him to communicate effectively, engage employees, and provide customers with a pleasant shopping experience.

### ***Let's see how Michael spends his day at work.***

8:11 a.m.



Michael is getting ready for a 7-hour shift this morning. Like most days, Michael will be overseeing close to 50 hourly associates at the store during his shift. Part of a global department store chain, his store has over 250 employees, so Michael has a lot of responsibility. Luckily, he feels confident he can do the

job because he's supported by a corporate structure that provides him with the tools and processes he needs to effectively lead his associates.

As he's having his morning coffee, Michael receives a notification on his phone through his company's digital workplace application from corporate.

***There is a new labor regulation coming into place next week that all store managers and assistant managers need to be trained on.***

Michael opens the notification and watches the 2-minute video which contains the training. He then checks off that he's completed the task. Michael

thinks back to his last job when his company required managers to update their safety training. He had to come in on his day off to sit in the cold back room and watch the hour-long training video on the store's only computer. Luckily, now he's able to complete any training on his own schedule – wherever he wants. Plus, he can offer his staff the same abilities.

10:03 a.m.

An employee that hasn't worked at Michael's store is coming in today for her first shift there. Tanya has worked for the company for over a year, and Michael can see her training and skills on her employee profile in the digital workplace application. When she applied to cover a shift at his store, Michael was glad to accept her to come work with his team. Tanya is replacing one of Michael's regular employees who came down with the flu 2 days ago and offered his shifts on the **Open Shift Marketplace**.

Although she usually works in Menswear at her home store, she's picking up a shift in Toys, which she is trained

to do. Michael feels confident that Tanya will do a good job today. He sees that she has many badges awarded to her in the digital workplace app for the trainings she has taken and the skills she has honed in on. The badges Tanya has earned showcase the skills she has honed at work, such as customer conflict resolution. She also has badges for achievements, such as being part of a team that set up the best Menswear display this year. Michael shows her around the store and introduces her to some of the other associates. He assigns her a few tasks through the digital workplace, then he lets her get to work helping customers.

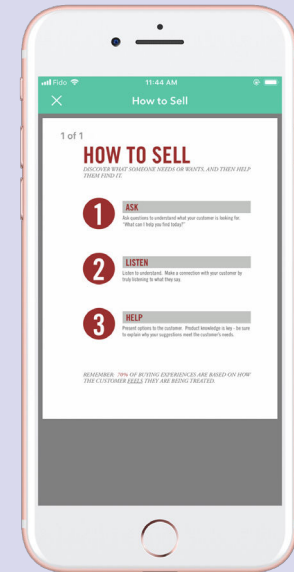
Having the ability to hire employees for the whole company – not just the store – is something Michael truly values. It took some getting used to because it is so different from Michael's previous workplace. Over there, Michael hired employees to work only at his location, and other store managers did the same. There was no system in place where employees could pick up shifts at other stores.

With retail turnover and absenteeism being so high, store managers often over-hired for their stores to ensure they had enough employees to cover shifts. However, that meant there were many

employees who were under employed and didn't get the number of hours they wanted. Those employees eventually left to find other jobs and the turnover cycle repeated itself.

Now, with the ability to have employees pick up shifts at multiple stores, recruitment has gone down overall by 15%. That's because employee turnover is decreasing, since associates have the ability to pick up and trade shifts as needed, giving them more freedom to control their schedules.

10:59 a.m.



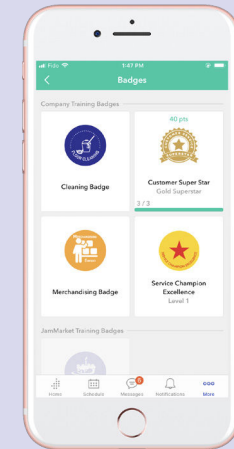
After helping a customer select an item from Hardware, Michael walks over to the break room to grab a quick drink of water. He takes a look at the digital workplace app on his phone and sees that an employee in another store has posted a question in the Q&A

communication channel. She is wondering if she has set up the new display in Shoes correctly. Before Michael can type in his answer, another employee has provided clarification and posted a link to a training video.

Michael is glad to see that this company has such a helpful and dedicated employee culture. This isn't the first time corporate training is supplemented with crowdsourcing - asking questions on dedicated help channels, receiving answers from seasoned, competent

personnel and compiling everything into a Q&A library - which helps his employees do their jobs more effectively. As a result, Michael and the other store managers have more time to lead associates and connect with customers.

11:56 a.m.



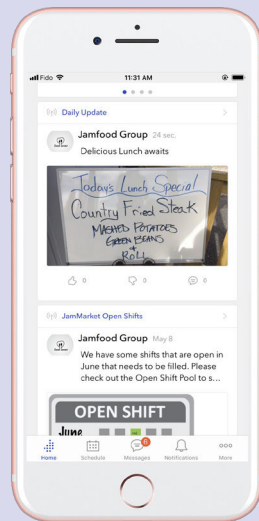
Michael helps an elderly customer carry her purchases out to the car, and then walks by the Shoes department and notices some stock out of place on the floor. As he starts cleaning it up, an employee from across the aisle in Children's Wear comes over to help him. They get the job done in minutes.

This would never have happened in Michael's previous workplace. Employees were very siloed in their departments and didn't venture out to assist their colleagues when needed. In fact, Michael once asked an employee from Kitchen to help put away some stock in Menswear after a sale and was told that she didn't work for Menswear, so she wasn't going to help.

At his new workplace, employees work across departments because they have the training and product knowledge to be able to do so. All associates are cross-functional as they have completed company-wide training for each department through the digital workplace app. **Employees receive badges on their profile, so store managers are able to see where they are able to work.**

Having product knowledge is vital to working in multiple departments. ***There is a product communication channel for each section of the store, where short videos and articles of the hottest products are posted.*** This way, employees can always be up to date on what they should promote to customers. This saves Michael a lot of administrative time as he doesn't need to rehash this knowledge to each employee.

1:01 p.m.



Michael receives a notification on the digital workplace app that Tanya has completed all the tasks he assigned her during her shift. He's happy to see that she's doing well on her first day at his store, but he's not surprised.

All of the employees that come from other stores have received consistent training and are able to jump right in and get to work without any issues. He adds a reward for her achievements today through the digital workplace app, which enables her to redeem a special employee discount at the store.

2:06 p.m.

A new intake of employees are about to begin their first shifts today, where they will shadow experienced associates. Michael hired these new employees 3 days ago. As soon as the paperwork was signed, Michael sent them an invitation on the digital workplace application. Even before their first shift begins, the **employees were able to watch onboarding videos in the comfort of their own home** and read through the employee booklet to familiarize themselves with the organization's processes.

As a result, **onboarding time has been cut in half**. At his old job, onboarding a new employee took a few shifts and was a frustrating and uncomfortable process for new employees. Not

only did they have to come into an unfamiliar place to watch outdated training videos in the back room where they didn't know anybody, they often had to wait a week or more before getting on the schedule. In many cases, these employees would find another job before they even started their first shift.

Michael knows hourly associates need to feel engaged and part of the workplace as soon as they are hired. That's why he appreciates having the ability to connect them with the rest of the company through the digital workplace app. This way, employee engagement happens from the very beginning. It's a part of the company's culture.

3:10 p.m.

*68% of employers say the most difficult part of scheduling is assigning shifts that accommodate both their staff's availability and business needs.<sup>1</sup>*

During his coffee break, Michael notices that some of his store's employees are trading shifts on the **Open Shift Marketplace** through the digital workplace app. He smiles, as he sees that the shifts are being picked up by other employees, without any requirement from him to intervene or help cover shifts.

At his last job, finding last minute arrangements for shifts was a nightmare. Michael spent up to 10 hours a week doing only that, and it was frustrating as it meant he lost a lot of productivity. He isn't the only one. In fact, **68% of employers say the most difficult part of scheduling is assigning**

***shifts that accommodate both their staff's availability and business needs.<sup>1</sup>***

Using the digital workplace, the associates have much more control over their schedules. Whenever an issue arises and they need to change their shifts, they can easily broadcast the open shift and have others pick it up. If they need to increase their hours, they can take on shifts from other stores. With this kind of control over their financial freedom, the employees are much happier. Plus, ***absenteeism has gone down considerably now that employees can better control their schedule.***

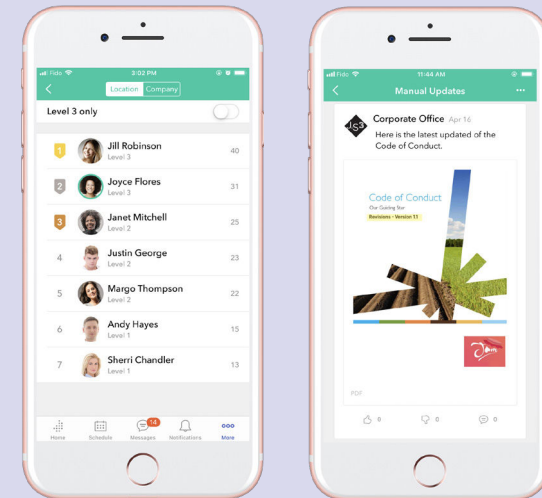
Michael doesn't need to worry about meeting the corporate staffing guidelines or regional labor regulations. Everything is customized into the **Open Shift Marketplace** so that employees can only pick up shifts according to those regulations. Compliance was a headache before as Michael had to manually ensure everything was in check.

Now, ***Michael spends only 5% of his week on administrative duties such as scheduling, instead of the 25% at his last job.*** An added bonus, he is able to complete his administrative tasks using the digital workplace app.

In fact, he no longer uses Yammer or WhatsApp to communicate for work, and rarely needs to consult the company intranet because all of the documents he needs are accessible by the digital workplace app on his phone.

With more time in his day, he is able to work on fostering customer relationships and coaching employees to do the same. This trickles down to every aspect of the business. Last quarter, Michael's company posted record-breaking sales results.

3:35 p.m.



As he's walking over to Womenswear to help an associate, Michael overhears 2 employees discussing a new clothing product launch they are excited about. He recalls seeing a recent update from the merchandising team about new bathing suits the store will be offering in about 6 months.

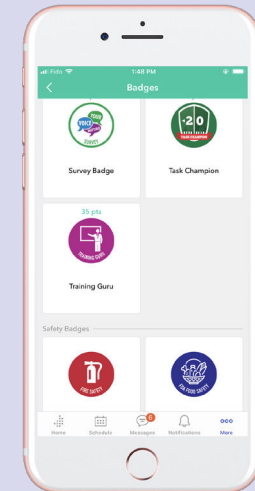
While the launch is still a while away, he's glad to see that the associates are involved and invested at this stage. ***Corporate shares regular updates with employees so they can be intimately involved with the entire process.*** This not only increases product knowledge, it engages employees on another level.

At his last job, Michael remembers getting product launch information in hard copy. He'd have to post it onto an old cork board in the break room and nag employees to make sure they read it before the launch. Often, customers would come in asking about new product and the employees wouldn't have a clue what they were talking

about, because they missed the memo in the break room.

Thankfully, that's not the case here. ***Michael can track which of his employees have read the product launch updates through the digital workplace app and easily ensure everyone is ready before the big day.***

4:08 p.m.



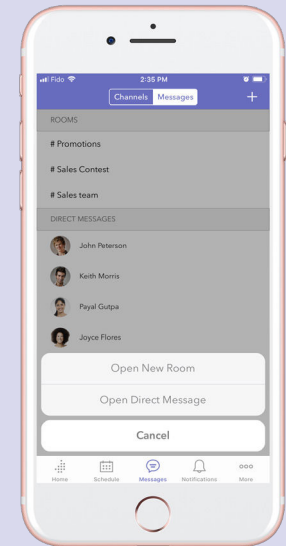
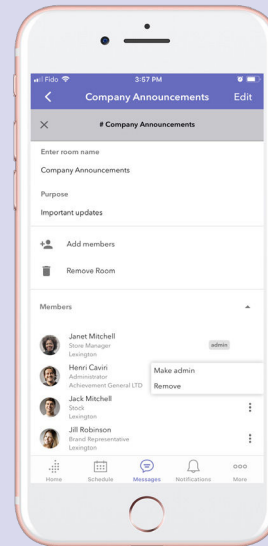
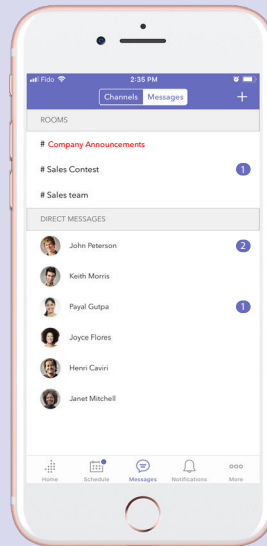
It's almost the end of Michael's shift and he does a last walkthrough of the store to see how everyone is doing. He encounters a few associates setting up a merchandising display in Housewares and he goes over to help. The associates are excitedly taking a photo of the completed display and sharing it in a communication channel

through the digital workplace app. The stores are always competing to see who can set up the best displays. Michael tells them he thinks they are going to win. He also gives them a reward for doing such a good job through the digital workplace app. The employees will receive additional discounts they can apply at the store.

It's a great feeling for managers and associates alike to be able to feel connected to other stores. A sense of camaraderie keeps employees engaged and gives them a confidence boost when they go to pick up shifts at neighboring stores as well, since they already feel like they know the people who work there.

Michael can quickly check to see that the display meets the store's requirements by consulting his digital workplace app for the checklist. He doesn't need to go to the back room to get the bulky binder of display guidelines like at his old workplace.

5:01 p.m.



When he arrives home, Michael notices a new post in the Celebrations communication channel. Maria, another store manager who he worked with a few months earlier, is celebrating 25 years of service. Her store held a luncheon for her and posted a couple of photos from the event.

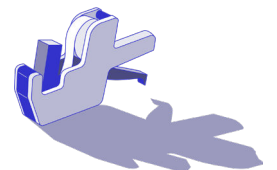
There are already hundreds of comments from other employees who had worked with her previously, sharing their stories and memories.

Michael even notices that an employee from his store, who is currently on maternity leave, has posted a comment. He's glad to see that she is still

connected to her colleagues and is able to take part in such celebrations from home.

Michael posts his own comment about how much he learned from Maria when he first started at the company. He loves being able to communicate with his colleagues and associates so easily and effectively.

Communication not only helps him do his job well, it ensures he – and his team – are engaged and invested in the business.





## A Well-Connected and Productive Day

***Store managers don't have to be burdened by administrative duties that add to the employee turnover and training issues they face on a daily basis.***

When managers are supported by digital workplace solutions, they are able to better engage their hourly workforce to reduce turnover and increase employee loyalty. Communication aids in training employees so they can better serve customers. It also gives employees the ability to control their schedules, relieving store managers from the task of finding employees to cover shifts at the last minute.

Instead of spending more time in the back room on the company intranet, store managers can build customer relationships on the store floor. ***They now have substantially more time to develop and coach employees and lead them to offer customers a pleasant, consistent experience.***

***Over 54% of retailers say that customer experience is the primary area of focus.***<sup>4</sup> The best way to improve service is to ensure store managers can collaborate with employees and corporate in real time – instead of spending unnecessary hours on administrative tasks that take them off the shop floor. With a highly trained and engaged workforce in retail, customers will notice the difference.

*For more information on WorkJam and how we can help you unleash the potential of your workforce, contact us today.*

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## SOURCES

1. [https://www.workjam.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/WorkJam\\_Study\\_Hiring-and-Scheduling-Crisis-in-Hourly-Workforce\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.workjam.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/WorkJam_Study_Hiring-and-Scheduling-Crisis-in-Hourly-Workforce_FINAL.pdf)
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