HR
STREAMLINING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

How interview scheduling software can help you attract the candidates you want, while saving time, money, and headaches.
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Question: In these times of limited resources, how do you incorporate efficient, consistent, industry-leading hiring SOPs without running your HR team ragged?

Let’s face it, human resources professionals are tasked with an unenviable burden. Coordinating the schedules of both existing staff and potential talent, while simultaneously marketing job openings and vetting new hires, is no easy task. Between job requisitions, applicant phone calls, and inefficient recruitment processes, the modern motto for HR seems to be “Too much to do, and not enough time to do it.” But how do you justify taking shortcuts when the role HR plays in the talent pipeline is crucial? A recent study of 20,000 new hires revealed that a whopping 46% were no longer in their positions 18 months after onboarding. Because turnover costs money and time, it’s important as an HR professional to get your hiring protocol geared up to full strength from the very first interaction.

Read on for a look at an elegant solution that will lighten your HR team’s workload, while preserving the value of all they do. It’s a simple formula: remove logistical headaches and replace them with dynamic, meaningful interactions. Mix well, and enjoy lower turnover, greater ROI on your incoming talent, and fewer job requisitions staring you down next year.
A Day in the HR Life

Of course, there's no such thing as a “typical” day for a human resources manager. Your primary focus can vary depending on any number of external factors, including the time of year, the structure of your company, and what's happening with the global economy.

However, one thing that's within your control — and almost always on your plate — is the complicated task of filling vacated positions. Even during a hiring freeze, when key team members leave, HR starts hunting for their replacements within 24 hours, guaranteed.

In an ideal world, the HR team would only have to deal with a single vacancy at a time, and would have an experienced recruiting specialist on staff to tackle the initial resume screenings. But the world of HR is not always ideal. And if you've done a great job at getting the word out about an open position, a pile of applications in need of triage is going to be an unavoidable part of your work day.

Finally, after you've completed the initial rounds of phone screens, it's time to bring in your candidates for some face time. Scheduling in-person interviews is an incredibly important step, but it's also a major time suck for busy HR managers. There are often several rounds of interviews per candidate, and each involves coordinating the time of existing staff members.
Why is carefully considering every aspect of the in-person interview scheduling so important? Because studies show that cutting corners when it comes to choosing who from the hiring team is available for an interview can have a major impact on the effectiveness of the meeting. In LinkedIn’s 2015 Talent Trends report, 53% of respondents indicated that they most looked forward to meeting their potential direct supervisor in an interview. Choosing efficiency over value and leaving critical members of the hiring team out of the interview process can mean disappointing your top candidate, and result in an unnecessary extension of the search.

But that’s okay, because an HR manager doesn’t have anything else to do besides schedule interviews anyway, right? Well, except for planning employee recognition programs, running onboarding sessions, sourcing professional development opportunities, and, of course, supervising the HR team.

If it seems like it’s become almost too much to manage, and something’s gotta give, don’t worry. We know just the thing.

**Old School Interview Scheduling**

Let’s get back to that dream scenario, where you’ve got just one open position to fill. Forget for a moment that you’ll probably interview anywhere from five to 15 people for the position, and let’s take a closer look at what’s involved in interviewing just a single applicant.

There are a lot of moving parts in this process, including:

- The applicant’s schedule
- The hiring manager’s schedule
- The hiring manager’s manager’s schedule
- Your schedule as an HR team member

There may be even more schedules to consider, depending on the position.

Whether you set up the interview with the candidate by phone or email, there’s a lot of legwork involved. Once you’ve identified those magical blocks of time in which everyone on your end is free in the right sequence, you have to pinpoint a time that also works for your candidate. If there’s not a match, you go back to the drawing board.
Good news! There's a different way to approach this process. One that eliminates the back and forth, and automates the appointment process so you don't have to mess with it at all: interview scheduling software.

**Interview Scheduling That’s Scalable**

Interview scheduling software improves the hiring process by giving job candidates the ability to slot interview times online at their convenience, any hour of the day.

When communicating to the job candidate about an interview, a company's HR coordinator or recruiting agency simply provides the candidate with a “Book Now” button or URL link that, when clicked, takes the individual to an online scheduler.

Once there, the candidate reviews the instructions, views all the available interview times, and selects one. The whole process occurs without anyone having to pick up a phone or write an email. Which means that when your candidates do get phone or face time with someone from your company, it's not about whether the conference call is at 9:30 or 11:45 am. Instead, the focus moves to their experience, potential, and future with your company. It's a simple shift that allows you to model key values of your company culture, like time management, balance, and focus.
The Benefits of Interview Scheduling Software

Businesses, organizations, and recruiters that use interview scheduling software can expect to see immediate, positive improvements over their previous scheduling methods. The benefits of this technology greatly outnumber those of traditional interview booking processes.

Often, the burdens of scheduling and managing job applicant interviews aren’t obvious. These numerous small, yet time-consuming processes are such a big part of the day-to-day experience of working in HR that they’re accepted as standard operating procedure.

However, a quick analysis of the resources necessary to manage the interview-scheduling process reveals how burdensome it truly is — and how much of it could be handled via automation.

Ready to learn more? Let’s get to it.

The benefits of interview scheduling software include:

- **Time savings.** HR personnel and recruiters spend less time on the phone scheduling, canceling, and rescheduling candidate interviews. There are also fewer voice messages left by candidates that have to be returned.

- **Monetary savings.** Staff responsibilities can be shifted to more pressing tasks, and no new administrative or support hires are necessary to manage the interview process.

- **Fewer no-shows.** Appointment confirmations and reminders mean less candidates missing their scheduled interview times. This helps speed up the hiring process.

- **Less time spent managing records and compiling reports.** Scheduling software eliminates the need to maintain separate spreadsheets, files, and folders.

- **Dramatic reduction in errors.** Overbooking, incorrect interview dates and times, and inaccurate candidate information? Forget about it.

- **Greater flexibility and convenience.** Job candidates are able to book their interviews anytime, 24 hours a day. This is especially appealing for freelancers and candidates who are already employed and seeking to transition from their current company.
What's more, using interview scheduling software means less stress for your top candidates. When they walk in the door, they won't already be flummoxed by all the logistical back-and-forth that goes along with traditional scheduling methods. Instead, they'll be primed to have dynamic, face-to-face interactions. Those interactions matter, big time. According to LinkedIn's Talent Trends study, 87% of respondents said that a positive interview experience can change their mind about a company or role they weren't sure about. So, what about an interview that starts with a bunch of apologies about the confusing email threads and multiple call backs? The data cuts both ways: 83% of the applicants in the LinkedIn study said that a negative first impression was enough to change their mind from “like” to “dislike.”

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What is Interview Scheduling Software, anyway?

Online interview scheduling software differs in format from more traditional software programs. It's SaaS- (Software as a Service) based, which means that the software is securely housed online, and accessible from any Internet-connected device rather than being confined to an individual desktop computer or network. As a result, both HR team members and candidates can access the scheduler easily and seamlessly, at any time of day.

The standard features found in interview scheduling software applications include:

1. **Online self-scheduling.** Job candidates enjoy the flexibility of scheduling their own interviews from their home computers, smartphones, and tablets.

2. **Automated email and text message reminders.** The system sends automated appointment confirmations and reminders to interviewees at a specified time prior to their scheduled interview. These simple reminders have been shown to reduce the no-show rate by more than 50%.
Confirmation/reminder messaging is customizable, and can include helpful information such as driving directions and check-in instructions. The ability to customize information can be a boon for attracting and retaining your top applicants, because it means you have the opportunity to communicate the voice and culture of your company from the very first interaction.

3. **Advanced record-keeping and reporting capabilities.** HR personnel and recruiters can instantly look up interview and candidate information from one centralized location instead of having to search through appointment books, spreadsheets, or files.

### Advanced functionality

Businesses that routinely schedule a large number of job interviews or have specific scheduling needs stand to benefit the most from the advanced functions offered with online interview scheduling software. Depending on the service provider selected, this functionality can include:

1. **High scalability.** The software can accommodate a large number of appointments and candidates, staff interviewers, and open positions.

2. **Web services integration.** The software can integrate with existing software in use at the business or organization.

3. **High configurability.** The software is easily able to accommodate more specific and advanced scheduling needs.

4. **Readily available, 24-hour live customer support.** Get help from locally-based representatives.

5. **Custom graphic user interface (GUI) development.** The ability of the scheduling site to incorporate elements from the company’s branded website creates a seamless experience for the end user.
Implementation

Because it’s a cloud-based technology, interview scheduling software does not require any downloads, installations, or additional hardware to utilize. Additionally, it typically does not require the involvement of in-house or contracted IT staff (unless special customization or integration is part of the implementation).

Once you’ve selected your software provider, you can configure the system to your company’s specific needs. You’ll be able to adjust settings to match your existing processes, such as marking available days and times for scheduling interviews, integrating hiring managers and specific positions, and specifying the type and frequency of appointment reminders.

What to look for in a provider

Your company has probably contracted with at least one other SaaS company before. If so, you know it’s important to do your homework upfront. There are several important factors to consider when choosing a scheduling software service provider. These include:

1. **Features and functionality.** Not all applications are built the same. You’ll want to determine in advance what your HR department currently needs, as well as what you may have a need for in the future, and compare these requirements with the features and functionality of the system being considered.

2. **Professional services.** Some organizations may call for scheduling services beyond the standard functionality of the provider’s system. Inquire as to what the provider currently offers, and if it has limitations for customization and advanced services. Even if you don’t think you’ll need these types of features now, it’s a good idea to know if the software is capable of growing with you in the future.
3. **Security.** Reputable providers incorporate the latest security measures and practices — such as secure server databases, data storage and backup procedures, and processes related to failover and federal regulations, if applicable — to their software.

4. **Cost.** Although free scheduling applications exist, most lack the features and functionality needed to effectively manage the interview scheduling process. Dependable systems charge a monthly fee that's typically well within the budgets of most businesses.

5. **Customer support.** Support can range from an online FAQ page to live, 24-hour customer phone support. Given the importance of interview scheduling in the hiring process, support is probably an important consideration for you when selecting a provider.

6. **Dependability.** A company's longevity is usually a good sign that a service provider is dependable. Find out how long the providers you're considering have been in business, and the types of clients they serve.

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Ready to take the next step and learn how AppointmentPlus® software can bring your HR Team to the forefront of interview scheduling?

In a 15-minute phone call, one of our Scheduling Software Experts will walk you through options to find the AppointmentPlus plan that's right for your scheduling needs.

Schedule a demo
About Kendall E. Matthews

As Vice President of Global Marketing and Communication at AppointmentPlus, I understand the challenges of recruiting. After interviewing hundreds of candidates, I've found that the qualities I most appreciate are conciseness and consistency.

About AppointmentPlus

AppointmentPlus® scheduling software is a configurable, rules-based, pure SaaS product. Our software — combined with our deep product integration knowledge, customer experience focus, and ability to both analyze synergies and synergize analogies — has made us the vendor of choice for many Fortune 500 companies.

Just want to talk directly to a Scheduling Software Expert?

In 15 minutes, we can help you find the plan that's right for your team.

Call 800.988.0061 or Schedule a demo

References:


2. 2015 Talent Trends Report, LinkedIn. 2015.