



Electronic & Data Management Issues

Avoid Scheduling Hiccups By William E. Ott

Scheduling personnel is always a challenge for EMS managers and supervisors, especially when managing odd shift-time arrangements, pools of part-time or volunteer personnel or filling specific personnel certification or experience requirements on certain units. I've spent some time with Jess Haynie from ISERA Group learning about and reviewing its powerful Quick Response CrewScheduler, which can address scheduling issues for agencies of any size or complexity. ISERA Group recently established an exclusive marketing arrangement with ZOLL Data Systems, formerly PinPoint Technologies, to market Quick Response CrewScheduler and other products for the EMS industry.

The real power of Quick Response CrewScheduler is in the flexibility of its Web interface and its abilities to model any type of shift combination and to incorporate custom business logic rules.

Quick Response CrewScheduler is available in two versions. One is the ASP model, in which ISERA Group hosts the server and you use the Internet to securely administrate your scheduling system and personnel and define all business rules. The ASP model is ideal for smaller agencies that don't have the internal IT resources to manage their own data server and associated issues. The ASP model is priced at \$10 per month per employee with a \$1,000 setup fee.

The second method of deploying Quick Response CrewScheduler is the Enterprise model, which requires having your own data server running Microsoft SQL Server 2000 and the proper IT resources and personnel to manage it. The average price for the Enterprise version is \$180 per employee plus a 20% annual maintenance and support contract.

The user experience is the same regardless of the deployment method. Managers and end users access the system via a Web browser, across the Internet for the ASP model and across the LAN or WAN for the Enterprise version.

The key points for Quick Response CrewScheduler are:

1. Schedule optimization—By reducing overtime and maximizing utilization of current resources, you'll see your annual payroll decrease as your call volume increases;
2. Conflict identification & resolution—By viewing your daily or monthly calendar, you can easily identify conflicts and empty shifts or replace scheduled resources quickly and effectively;
3. Crew satisfaction—With flexible scheduling, crews get the shifts they want, when they want them;
4. Schedule currency—By using a dynamic scheduling system, you always get the latest and greatest schedule;
5. Qualifications & certification—By interfacing with your HR system, you can ensure that each vehicle and employee is properly equipped or qualified to fulfill your complex shift requirements;
6. Schedule distribution—All schedules are visible 24 hours a day, on or off site for instantaneous distribution. All you need is a computer with Internet access to view your schedule;
7. Scheduling duties—Schedules can be adjusted 24/7 from on site, a satellite office or even home;
8. Shift bidding—By enabling your team to view and bid for empty shifts, you can easily resolve availability conflicts or PTO requests. Schedulers can view all requests, current shifts scheduled and utilization statistics;
9. Detailed reports—Includes an extensive range of reports, such as Resource Utilization, Shift Summaries, Daily Schedules and more, which can be exported in most commonly used formats, such as Excel, Word or HTML; and
10. Data import—Easily integrate data from current payroll, dispatch, human resources or timekeeping system.

Quick Response CrewScheduler can interface with other software or data systems via Open Database Connectivity standards. It runs on Microsoft SQL Server 2000, which can handle thousands of transactions per day without a problem, and the interface is developed with Microsoft ASP.Net.

Quick Response CrewScheduler allows personnel to bid on open shifts, yet it can control who can successfully be placed through behind-the-scenes business logic. Therefore, an EMT-I can't fill a spot requiring an EMT-P, and a male can't fill a position requiring a female, etc.

With the Enterprise version, agencies can run Quick Response CrewScheduler on their LAN/WAN only or also make it available via the Internet, with some IT expertise.

Once users are established in Quick Response CrewScheduler, they can configure their own notification options, such as by text

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to a pager or cell phone or via e-mail, so Quick Response CrewScheduler can automatically notify personnel who meet minimum requirements when a new opening is available. The program can also notify managers or supervisors when personnel trade time, a conflict exists or a slot is unfilled.

The basic flow of operations for Quick Response CrewScheduler is:

1. Security
 - a. Basic user accounts should be created for administration, schedulers and supervisors; and
 - b. Group accounts should be assigned with special permissions.
2. Resources/regions
 - a. Divisions and locations are created (e.g., North, South, East, West);
 - b. Regions within divisions are created (e.g., Station 1, headquarters, dispatch);
 - c. Resources should be added to each region (e.g., ambulances, personnel, helicopters); and
 - d. Resources are assigned custom attributes (e.g., driver's license number, certifications, e-mail address, hire date, etc.).
3. Slots
 - a. Slots are created to be inserted into shifts (e.g., ambulance, paramedic, EMT, cadet, volunteer, ride-along); and
 - b. Slot requirements are specified with slot constraints. These are used to qualify resources for slots (e.g., CPR cert date, driver's license expiration date, seniority or skill set).
4. Shifts
 - a. Shift names are defined;
 - b. Shift lengths are defined; and
 - c. Slots are then assigned to shifts (e.g., 12-hour shift has three slots—one medic, one EMT, one ambulance).
5. Rotations
 - a. Assign shifts to rotations (e.g., Rotations can be three shifts on/four shifts off, 24 on/48 off, DuPont schedule, etc.).

Quick Response CrewScheduler offers extensive reporting capabilities on all aspects of operation to allow management staff to closely monitor scheduling issues and trends. Because the program has an open architecture, managers can use such tools as Crystal Reports to create custom, ad-hoc reports as desired.

ISERA Group offers extensive training and support, ranging from Web-based to complete on-site train-the-trainer programs.

Quick Response CrewScheduler fills an obvious need for large agencies that have one or more full-time scheduler positions. However, it could also prove valuable for even the smallest of agencies in managing part-time and volunteer personnel.

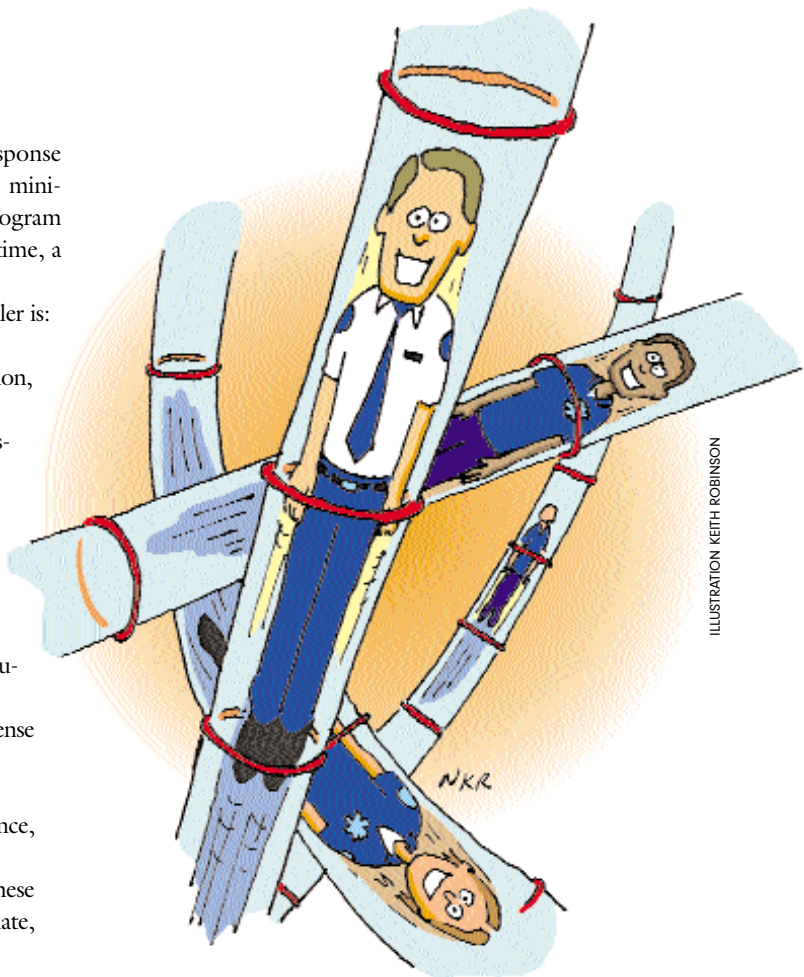


ILLUSTRATION KEITH ROBINSON

This is one of the most powerful software applications I've seen to date developed specifically for the EMS industry. The program is in use across the country at many sites, including Acadian Ambulance, EMSA, SouthWest Ambulance Las Vegas, New Britain EMS, Emergency Resource Management, Mission Security, Santa Barbara Police Department and Bay Medical.

If you'd like more information on Quick Response CrewScheduler, contact Jess Haynie with ISERA Group at 877/438-2739 or Jim Potter, vice president of marketing for ZOLL Data Systems at 303/801-1836, or visit the CrewScheduler Web site at www.crewscheduler.com. JEMS



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