



Auto Scheduling

Delivering the benefits of auto scheduling within your business

In Brief

Automated scheduling systems have the potential to provide significant improvements in customer service and to deliver substantial cost and efficiency savings.

Case studies have shown:

- 30% increase in utilisation
- 20% reduction in travel
- 80% reduction in schedulers
- 20% improvement in SLAs

These are impressive figures but achieving these can prove to be difficult.

This paper examines some of the challenges which need to be addressed to realise the benefits.

The benefits of a well implemented auto scheduling solution can be impressive. They can deliver significant cost savings due to higher workforce utilisation, reduced travel costs and fewer back office scheduling staff. Equally important is the improved customer service delivered through tighter management of appointments and SLAs. Whilst the initial cost of implementation may be high, the Return on Investment (ROI) can be achieved within the first year of operation, with further year on year savings to follow.

The Challenge

Delivering the benefits can be extremely challenging, and as a result projects may fail to deliver the expected return on investment.

The first challenge is identifying a scheduling tool best suited to the business. There are many products on the market which have originated from different backgrounds. Selecting the right one for your business can greatly reduce the cost of integration and operation.

Having selected a scheduling tool, the challenge is integrating it with the service management systems and the mobile technology deployed in the field. For the full benefits to be realised, the business processes and information need to be modelled, mapped and coordinated seamlessly across all of these systems.

How Complex is Your Business?

It is essential to fully understand the true business requirement for auto scheduling from the outset. This will determine whether a simple “static” scheduling model is sufficient or a complex “dynamic” one is required.

- **Static:** A static model is where jobs are raised and scheduled in advance, and remain relatively unchanged on the day the work is carried out.
- **Dynamic:** A dynamic model is one where reactive jobs can be raised for immediate scheduling and where existing jobs may be updated on the day requiring the schedule to be adjusted in real-time as the job requirements and workload change.

Critical Success Factors

The complexity and cost of implementing an auto scheduling solution will vary considerably depending on the nature of the business. However there are a number of factors which are critical to the success of the project and will need to be addressed early in the implementation.

- **You get out what you put in.** Scheduling systems are sophisticated engines able to optimise the allocation of jobs to mobile workers. However, their performance is only as good as the information they are supplied with. In complex businesses, providing the necessary set of scheduling data may require complex system changes and considerable data preparation by the business.
- **It's all or nothing.** Scheduling tools will not be effective if they only have visibility of jobs. All activities in the mobile workers day need to be auto scheduled, and all these activities need to be identified from the outset.
- **Time is of the essence.** Dynamic scheduling systems must constantly monitor and re-evaluate the work allocations based on the current status of activities. The source of this information, be it from the mobile worker, operations, vehicle tracking, or other sources must be identified.
- **If it can happen, it will happen.** Many implementations are designed to cope with the expected normal operation of the business. Unlike people, systems cannot adapt to handle "unexpected" events. In reality, exceptions can become the norm. To avoid excessive manual intervention, these exceptions must be catered for in the operational workflows and automated in the technology.
- **Things will never be the same again.** The change required to support auto scheduling is considerable for all parts of the business. Existing working practices will have to change and will usually be met with resistance. Careful transition planning and training is essential.
- **Less haste, more speed.** Implementing an effective scheduling solution requires detailed planning, especially if the business model is complex. Identifying and addressing all implementation challenges upfront will take time but will payoff in the long term.

Successful Implementation

When implementing auto scheduling, the biggest impact is likely to be on the mobile workforce. When it goes live it must be right first time because:

- if problems arise in live operation it will affect a large number of mobile staff and manual intervention may be difficult;
- the resistance from the mobile staff will be high and any system failings will create a loss in confidence and may stall the roll-out.

In addition there may be hidden practices to unearth which will only come to light when the system is used in the field. Therefore, undertaking a pilot of the new system and processes, with a small number of schedulers and mobile users is an essential step to proving the system. Sufficient time should be allowed for problems to be identified and resolved before a staged roll-out to the business commences.

Involving the schedulers and mobile workers in the pilot will enable them to champion the new ways of working and help support the roll-out to the rest of the business.

About Enton

We help our clients with the delivery of business change.

Enton has considerable knowledge and experience of implementing both simple and complex auto scheduling.

We are experienced people with commercial, programme and technology backgrounds able to work within complex organisations.

Enton work with our clients to increase their top line performance and improve bottom line returns.

If you are about to embark on a new initiative or have problems with an existing one then please contact us.



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