

How Did St. Cloud Give Dispatchers More Time Back Every Day?

Scheduling Automation: Improving Dispatcher Efficiency with TripSpark and SharpStack



About the Agency

St. Cloud's transportation team handles scheduling and dispatching in a fast-paced environment with varying workloads and trip demand. All dispatchers are trained to manage rides, fostering shared responsibility. By implementing scheduling automation, the agency surfaced a need to reduce manual work, enhance efficiency, and create a more resilient scheduling process that better adapts to operational changes.

THE CHALLENGE

- **Manual scheduling process:** Before implementing scheduling automation, St. Cloud's team relied on manual processes that required dispatchers to closely monitor unscheduled rides to ensure no trips were missed or left unassigned.
- **Unpredictable workload:** The time required varied by day and overall workload, making the process time-consuming and difficult to predict.
- **Constant dispatcher oversight:** Dispatchers were responsible for manually placing rides, clearing runs, and tracking unscheduled trips, which required consistent attention throughout the day.
- **Risk of missed rides:** One of the biggest operational pain points was the risk of missing an unscheduled ride, especially during busy periods when staff had to place rides or clear runs manually.
- **Goal for automation:** The agency pursued automation to improve efficiency, giving dispatchers more time to support future ride bookings instead of manually managing every scheduling adjustment.

Real Efficiency Gains

*Hours Saved
Weekly
~20 hours*

"Scheduling automation has helped us save significant time and improve dispatcher efficiency, allowing our team to focus on serving riders instead of manually managing every trip."

-Missy Kraemer, Operations Manager

THE SOLUTION

- **Tailored Preferences:** SharpStack and St. Cloud worked together to configure automated scheduling agents based on St. Cloud's operational requirements, rider preferences, and budget constraints.
- **Advance Scheduling:** Future schedule service requirements were defined and utilized by an agentic optimizer that automatically schedules trips, resulting in minimal human intervention.
- **Day of Service:** Given the higher variability of service conditions during actual operations, an additional agentic optimizer was deployed to facilitate same-day schedule changes and continuously improve the schedule.

THE RESULT

- **Less manual ride placement:** With scheduling automation, St. Cloud's dispatchers can place rides in the unscheduled queue and allow the system to support the scheduling process, reducing the need to place every ride manually.
- **More efficient workload management:** This shift helps dispatchers manage their workload more efficiently while still staying engaged in day-to-day scheduling decisions.
- **More time for future bookings:** The agency has seen workload improvements, giving the team more room to focus on responsibilities such as booking future rides.
- **Improved operational resilience:** The system also helps the agency respond to day-to-day variability, including unexpected staff callouts, reducing pressure on dispatchers and strengthening operational resiliency.

Working Together

"It was great to work with the team. The SharpStack and TripSpark teams were very helpful and knowledgeable."

- Missy Kraemer, Operations Manager