

How Blink Elevated Its Workforce Management Practices



INDUSTRY: HEALTH AND FITNESS | EMPLOYEES: 2,000+ | LOCATIONS: 100+

Before Legion

- Inefficient scheduling using spreadsheets
- Manual forecasts
- No labor optimization
- Lack of visibility into workforce analytics

After Legion

- Fully-automated scheduling tied to guest check-ins
- Location-specific demand forecasts driven by machine learning
- Labor budget allocation with automated schedule tweaks
- Full visibility into schedules, labor metrics, compliance

Results

- 10,000+ hours saved annually on scheduling
- 100 clubs have location-specific forecasting and scheduling
- 90+ locations onboarded in three months
- 90% adoption rate of mobile app

Blink Fitness started in 2011 and has since grown to over 100 locations in the US. A premium-quality, value-based fitness chain, Blink's company philosophy of Mood Above Muscle™ emphasizes the positive feelings derived from exercise in addition to the physical benefits. In 2018, Blink was named one of Inc's 5,000 fastest growing companies with a three-year growth rate of 208%. Blink's Every Body Happy campaign features real people in varying shapes and sizes. Their website highlights the colorful gym design, elevated customer service, and a relentless focus on cleanliness.

By 2018, Blink had grown quickly, but its workforce management practices had not. Blink then began speaking with Legion Technologies.

"We relied on spreadsheets and a very painful scheduling process," said Maggie Bach, senior Manager, Operations, Communications & Learning at Blink, who is responsible for employee onboarding, training, and day-to-day operations for Blink's 100+ locations. "From the first demo, we understood the visibility Legion WFM offered," says Bach. "Legion answered two questions," says Bach. "How to maximize hours? And, are we putting hours to work in the right way?" Legion aligned with our brand and was an especially good fit for our employees using the mobile scheduling app." Bach said.

From Pilot to Full Rollout in Three Months

Blink first conducted a pilot of Legion WFM with three diverse clubs. First was a high-volume club in Queens, the second a facility that's open 24-hours a day, and the third was a California location, to ensure there was no lag in actions being conducted at Blink's New York headquarters.

Bach explained that this gave Blink time with the Legion Customer Success team to ensure Legion WFM was adopted, training was in place, and most importantly, it was useful for employees.

After the successful pilot, Blink established an aggressive timeline to launch Legion WFM into 90 Blink facilities within three months.

“The experience has been great so far,” said Bach. “The Legion team’s ability to take feedback and be flexible with us and our needs has been great. We can still learn so much from each other.”

Blink Fitness’s franchise brands were onboarded in the summer of 2019. These franchisees use the Blink-specific configuration of Legion WFM, so the experience for club managers and employees is the same across all Blink locations.

Employee Engagement Spikes with Mobile App

According to Bach, one of the biggest benefits of using Legion WFM since its implementation has been the employee engagement app.

“The mobile app is a much bigger hit amongst our employees than we expected,” Bach said. “Being able to have the schedule so easily accessible is a big plus for our employees, and shift swaps are really easy.”

The Legion WFM mobile app is available for iOS and Android devices, and over 90% of Blink’s employees are using the app voluntarily. Features are self-serve, including shift preferences, availability, time-off requests, schedules, and shift swaps. Clubs still print paper schedules, and employees can use a browser to indicate scheduling preferences and see their schedules if they opt not to use the app.

Bach said Blink managers approve shift swaps, but now it’s more efficient as employees can directly contact others with offers and serve themselves. She explained that the entire scheduling process, with one-click schedule generation, is a large time-saver. “I estimate we are saving two hours per week per club in scheduling, which equates to over 10,000 saved hours across clubs annually,” said Bach.

Demand Forecasts Integrate Guest Check-in Data

Legion WFM Demand Forecasts are created for each business and location, relying on machine learning for extremely high accuracy; they continually improve as actual numbers are used for occasional model retraining. “Blink forecasts are based on guest check-in data and are location-specific,” said Bach, and check-in files are sent to Legion by the hour. “Some clubs have staff for 230 hours per week while others such as 24-hour clubs are staffed 620 hours per week, so this location specificity is important.”

With highly accurate labor demand forecasts, Bach says Legion answers the critical question of whether Blink is staffed optimally.

Bach says that another benefit of using Legion WFM is built-in labor compliance standards. “California is the strictest of our regions for labor laws,” says Bach. “It’s very helpful to have compliance factored in.” Legion WFM pre-loads compliance templates for all states and regions, then auto-flags any potential violations during the scheduling and timesheet process. As schedules are auto-generated, compliance is automatically factored in.

“Questions like ‘are we spending hours the right way?’ were answered. Legion aligned with our brand, and it was an especially good fit for our employees using the mobile scheduling app.”



Maggie Bach

Senior Manager, Operations,
Communications & Learning

Budget Constraints Automatically Reconfigure Schedules

Bach pointed to another benefit of using Legion WFM: the budgeting feature. Budgets are set based on check-in data that feeds the demand forecasts. “Legion WFM’s automated forecasts may allocate 415 hours of labor, but I can input 400 as the number, and Legion WFM will schedule according to this budget,” said Bach. She noted that Blink payroll also uses Legion WFM to dig into employee-specific workforce data and review audit data, such as meal break adherence.

“Scaling is much more possible..”

When asked to summarize the overall benefits of Legion WFM, Bach points to employee satisfaction and visibility, including the ability to see all employee schedules, overspending, and underspending. One of the more important benefits, she added, is Blink’s ability to scale its tools as it continues to rapidly grow its business. “Our investment has been very valuable with Legion. All of our employees and area managers have bought into Legion WFM, and they like using it,” said Bach. “We have grown tremendously in the past year...as we grow, scaling is much more possible with an automation tool like Legion WFM,” she concluded.



Blink gyms feature colorful design, elevated customer service and a relentless focus on cleanliness.