To:          Professor Erika Patterson

From:     Morgan Brandt

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Subject: Research Proposal for Determining the Feasibility of Improving Employee Hour Allocation and Job Satisfaction at SW Event Technology

**Introduction**

Sound Wave Event Technology, SW, employs over 100 employees at multiple branch locations since the early 1980s. While they have moved their scheduling to the digital shift planning software Humanity, an online application for job information and timecards, the system they have in place to allocate hours amongst their employees causes disparity through seniority, department, experience, and labour requirements for each event taken on.

**Statement of Problem**

There is a disparity in how hours are allocated leaving some jobs over or understaffed, assigning some staff members under 30 hours per week and giving others over 50 hours per week. Most of the senior staff has been with the company for over a decade and with time comes lifestyle changes such as growing families, career goals, and external business ventures. With these things in mind, shift work becomes inconsistent to schedule around, especially when the allotted hours do not accurately reflect overtime in the schedule, sometimes working 4 plus hours passed the scheduled work period. This disrupts the staff’s work/life balance, causing some resistance to commit themselves during peak seasons.

**Proposed Solutions**

The solutions I intend to investigate involve working with the employee’s goals and desires when possible to foster a dedicated workforce during peak seasons. One possible solution is revamping the system used to allocate hours to technicians based on their survey responses as to what types of shifts, gigs, and venues they prefer, and matching these parameters to the labour demands of the event. This lifestyle survey could occur during the company’s yearly appraisals to identify the wants and desires of the employee regarding job demands, performing meaningful and challenging work, as well as providing a balance between work and personal life.

Currently, SW carries out a thorough appraisal regarding career growth and goals, but by coupling the lifestyle survey into this routine, the data derived from the document would prevent miscommunication of personal needs throughout the year and provide a foundation for shared work expectations between the worker and employer. So, by catering to these needs and desires most of the year, employee job satisfaction should increase, fostering a dedicated workforce in the peak seasons.

**Scope**

To asses the feasibility of changing the system of hour allocation at SW Event technology, I plan to pursue the seven areas of inquiry:

1. How does management allocate hours currently?
2. How much training is available and provided to staff to prepare them for a variety of jobs?
3. What factors are currently taken into consideration for every job estimate?
4. What are employee preferences for hour allocation and shift preferences?
5. Does every employee feel that their skills are utilized and valued regularly?
6. Can the annual employee appraisal be modified to asses changing lifestyles to better serve how hours are allocated?
7. Where does management see room for improvement?

**Methods**

My primary data will include personal interviews with each tier of management: Craig Westly, General Manager, Barry Fisher, Shift Manager, Ben Pidskainy, Vice President and Cal McCarthy, Part Owner and Founder. These interviews will be used to discuss my questions of inquiry and derive the data to create an anonymous survey. In this survey, staff will be asked a series of questions about work/life balance, meaningful work, and job preferences. For on-site observations evaluate the characteristics of SW’s three main work environments: warehouse, corporate venues, and festival sites. With this information, I can better define environmental preferences for employees when deciding on their ideal work environments based on three factors: event type, travel opportunities, and labour requirements.

Secondary sources will include literature on job satisfaction, work scheduling processes, and Marxist publications about cultural industry.

**My Qualifications**

I have worked with SW for over a year and have worked in team environments involving scheduling since 2015. throughout this time, SW’s management team has opened a discourse with staff over what improvements should be made in the company as it grows. Now, my course work in cultural industries provides a foundation in fostering balanced work environments and the changes the industrial revolution had in creating the current job market. This critical background in cultural industry and my association with SW during this period of change gives me the opportunity for an in-depth feasibility study on their practices and what improvements can be made.

**Conclusion**

Evidently, the disparity between staff with hour allocation greatly affects job satisfaction and work/life balance overall. I believe that by addressing the areas of inquiry mentioned above, I can offer 3 calculated opportunities for SW to improve their scheduling procedures to better staff events with technicians who enjoy their work and have a balanced work/life schedule. With your approval Professor Patterson, I will begin research at once.