

Engineering Management
Field Project

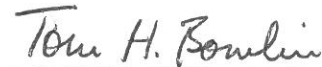
**Staffing Optimization Tools for a 24 x 7
Telecommunications Control Center Environment**

By

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Executive Summary

This research explored optimization techniques to assist in personnel scheduling in a telecommunications environment. A survey of personnel was conducted to help determine basic employee priorities and two models were implemented in Microsoft Excel Solver to assist in providing data to support employee scheduling.

The first model is linear and, given the number of people required during each hour of the week, determines the optimal number of personnel that should be working each of the available shift types, with an objective of minimizing cost. This tool includes the option to include or exclude particular shifts depending on employee and management preference. This model is found to be a useful tool in learning about the cost implications of various shifts and is suitable for assisting in shift scheduling.

The second model designed is nonlinear and minimizes variance in the hourly utilization rate of personnel. Given a fixed number of people, the model seeks to determine the optimal number of personnel that should be working each of the available shift types, with an objective of balancing capacity to demand across each hour of the week. Microsoft Excel Solver is found to be insufficient in handling the number of constraints in this nonlinear model. Implementation of this methodology within a more powerful software package is suggested for future research.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

This author has worked in a variety of telecommunications positions, many of which included managing centralized groups of people who monitor, control or otherwise support networks. Due to the continuous-operating nature of telecommunications, it became clear that human resource capacity planning and scheduling were key skills that can directly impact the success of departments. This research stems from the need to better understand scheduling in a control center environment, to stay cost competitive.

As a matter of introduction, this section describes the environment that was researched, offers insight into existing practices for shift scheduling, the challenges with objectively measuring staff needs and explains the purpose for the current research.

Description of Environment

Within telecommunications companies, a common fixture is the network operations control center (NOCC). At this author's employer, the NOCC evolved significantly. Because the company provides multiple technologies to its customers, each technology was originally supported by its own business segment. Internal IT applications and networks, classic wireline (dialtone, phone operators, etc.) networks, IP or other packet-based data networks, optical fiber networks, wireless networks, and more. Due to technology evolution, consolidation within the marketplace and ever-decreasing profit margins, individual business segments have been forced to merge to some degree.

While there were multiple NOCCs with different locations, distinct software applications, disparate management teams and physical layouts, there is now predominantly one control center. Multiple technologies and networks supported from one large center. The center is a collection of pods or small groupings of PC-based

workstations. Each worker has multiple monitors to help assist with managing the multiple software applications and simultaneous moving parts. Within the one center, there are different groups that focus on different networks, but all of the groups have similar furniture, software tools, management practices and compensation structure.

Existing Shift Scheduling Practices

One fundamental difference that can persist between control center groups and even between managers within a specific network segment is how personnel shift scheduling is handled. In many cases, differences in processes will drive inefficiencies or cost and may be perceived as negatives as they appear as inconsistencies to customers. Differences in shift planning practices persist because each manager has their own opinion about what is the most cost-efficient method and the differences are not apparent to internal and external customers.

Without thorough analysis of scheduling and staffing methods, crude guidelines develop amongst workgroups. For example, the table below was offered as a static rule of thumb for determining how many total staff are required if a person needed a certain amount of people on any given shift:

# of staff required per shift	# of staff required for 24x7 coverage
1	6
2	9
3	15
.	
.	
.	
26	117
27	123
28	126

Many state labor laws and much of the American social culture are built around a five day work week, Monday through Friday. In a continuous staffing environment, there is considerable debate about how to best schedule personnel so there is adequate weekend coverage. If personnel are scheduled as in the five continuous days per week example shown in Figure 1, the end result is excess resources in the middle of the week and a staffing gap on Friday and Monday.

	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
Analyst 1	X	X	X	X	X		
Analyst 2	X	X	X	X	X		
Analyst 3	X	X	X	X	X		
Analyst 4		X	X	X	X	X	
Analyst 5		X	X	X	X	X	
Analyst 6		X	X	X	X	X	
Analyst 7		X	X	X	X	X	
Analyst 8			X	X	X	X	X
Analyst 9			X	X	X	X	X
Analyst 10			X	X	X	X	X
Total Staff:	3	7	10	10	10	7	3

Figure 1: Example of simplified schedule

Management will often resort to smoothing and filling gaps across the weekends with personnel working four 10-hour shifts from Friday to Monday, as the undesirability of working weekends is perceived to be mitigated by only having to commute and work four days a week.

Management decisions around shift scheduling are largely made with the intent to maintain employee satisfaction while maintaining adequate staffing. To ensure that management better understood what some of the control center staff preferences were, this author deemed it necessary to perform a survey to gather feedback from employees. Detail about the questions asked and the responses received are included in chapter 4.

Challenges with Objectively Measuring Staff Needs

One approach to staffing and scheduling seeks a quantitative method to look at various work drivers to determine how many total staff are needed within a workgroup and at any particular time. This avenue is problematic for multiple reasons.

Managers find ways to perform work with less staff as cost reductions are forced upon organizations. While various spreadsheets and models may indicate that a certain staffing level is required to effectively perform a function, one can observe that over the course of years, the job can be done with less staff. Due to necessity, when faced with market-driven budget cuts, telecommunications groups will manage the same number of network elements with less people. As staffing is reduced per network element managed, various process quality levels may change, but are difficult to quantify. Items such as the quality of ticket notes, the length of time that a questionable circuit is tested before calling it “restored” or the quality of handoff information between shifts or groups will vary without easy means to measure them. With this variation, the impact upon the end product can be minimal or at least difficult to determine in an objective fashion.

One example of this subjectivity in staffing levels is using the number of trouble tickets (instances of problems) as a driver for staff levels. The use of trouble tickets as work tasks is common for IT help desks and network control centers. If the number of network elements being managed by a control center increase, logically the number of trouble tickets will increase at some rate that can be correlated to the quantity of elements. However, control center employees may change their criteria for when tickets are opened, or criteria for when the tickets are allowed to be closed or “parked”. This can happen informally- it can start with one or two personnel on a less visible shift and spread

to other employees as they socialize about work volumes and methods for managing time. It can be started during a disaster event when the volume is unmanageable and the differences in behavior then inadvertently carry over into subsequent everyday practices.

Another factor that detracts from the ability to directly measure the amount of needed staff is that assumptions about the amount of time to perform functions such as open or close a ticket or restore an outage are ever-changing as people develop shortcuts and IT systems are improved.

Purpose of Current Research

Given the difficulties described above with directly measuring the required number of people on any given shift, this research focuses instead on methods for knowing how to best schedule resources when either the number needed at a particular time is given or if the total staff available to apply to the problem is given.

When employee preferences are known, there is a desire to understand the cost of accommodating employee preferences such as consecutive days off and 10-hour work shifts. For example, when three 10-hour shifts are used in a day, the result can include extra personnel for two or more hours, two to three times a day. An objective is to determine whether or not this overlap in employee coverage is financially significant.

This research explores methods of optimizing employee scheduling to reduce inefficiencies and validate if reducing those inefficiencies has significant financial benefit as compared to accommodating employee preferences. This author researches shift planning methods and seeks to introduce empirical data and optimization tools to learn more about the most efficient ways to schedule employee shifts.

This research on telecommunications scheduling is unique as it: (1) assumes that the correct/appropriate ratio of servers to demand is unknown or at least highly dynamic and, therefore, efforts are largely focused on how to optimally staff given that a certain amount of workers are available, (2) seeks to understand whether or not there is a significant financial impact that can be realized by using more formal scheduling methods as opposed to traditional methods, and (3) endeavors to explore which aspects of the scheduling problem can and cannot be adequately optimized using Excel Solver.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In performing a review of prior research, this author focused on three major categories:

- Overall methods and guidance for modeling a continuous operation.
- Modeling of environments similar to telecommunications NOCCs, specifically healthcare.
- The prospects for using a spreadsheet based tool for modeling.

The findings below helped shape the course of the current research.

Modeling Continuous Operations Environments

In 1993, Brusco and Jacobs performed a study of personnel scheduling in continuously operating organizations. Specifically, an environment where the staff are employed 24 x 7 is referred to as a continuous tour-scheduling problem and involves personnel shifts overlapping 24 hour periods. They point to continuous operating environments often employing full-time and part-time employees and assert that “continuous models are extremely difficult to solve optimally” and are “typically impervious to optimal solution approaches.” (Brusco and Jacobs, 1993).

However, the Brusco and Jacobs study assumes that you have both full-time and part-time staff, which further increases complexity. They note that one method is to reduce the number of variables by assuming there is no overlap between 24 hour periods and refer to the resulting problem as a “discontinuous tour-scheduling” problem. (Brusco and Jacobs, 1993).

Their study found that when you model a continuous operating environment as a discontinuous operating environment, it is often not a good fit and “the potential exists

for significant excess schedule costs.” (Brusco and Jacobs, 1993). This is significant and directly relevant to this current research: a continuous telecommunications environment needs to be modeled as such. Brusco and Jacobs used a heuristic approach and found that it produced “superior schedules at far less computational effort” than optimization techniques. (Brusco and Jacobs, 1993). However, because the Brusco and Jacobs study was performed in 1993, the computational methods are considerably different than those used today. For their linear programming, they used SAS/OR run on an HP9000-835s minicomputer, with a maximum of 1000 CPU seconds (approximately 17 minutes). Their heuristic approach used an application coded in Fortran and run on the same minicomputer platform. Their platform used in their study was capable of approximately 3 Million Instructions Per Second, whereas the common personal computer today is capable of significantly more computational power.

Gartner, Musliu and Slany developed a method of creating rotational schedules using a semi-automatic approach which uses some degree of user response/input in conjunction with the software routines. They compare their approach to a benchmark which is fully automated and seeks the optimal solution. Their finding is that the method that uses some human interaction is faster than going straight for an automatic, optimal solution. Further, they point to the advantages of “interaction with human decision makers” as a way to account for “soft constraints, which are otherwise more difficult to assess and model.” Their solution is now contained in a commercial package from Ximes, with a non-trivial cost. (Gartner et al., 2001).

Healthcare Modeling

In a review of literature, it becomes clear that nurse-related scheduling is one of the most closely studied, using a variety of methods. Since the early 1970's, there have been numerous studies surrounding scheduling nurses in a hospital environment. Hospitals, in some respects, are analogous to a telecommunications control center environment due to their continuous 24 hours a day, seven days a week staffing and the tendency for all resources to be employed in the same physical building or cluster of buildings.

Nursing-related studies largely focus around how many nurses are needed at any time to satisfy nurse to patient ratios and assume that nurse schedules rotate. Past studies point to more complex problems that cannot be easily solved through optimization and therefore alternate methods are created, however evidence also exists that optimization is a realistic tool for this environment.

In 2006, Wright, Bretthauer and Cote performed an extensive study on the nurse scheduling challenge. In their model, shifts were either eight hours or 12 hours. They designed the problem with two objectives and as a nonlinear set of relations. The first objective was to minimize nurse wages and second was to minimize undesirable shifts. When all constraints are in place, the problem is described as "difficult to solve." To tackle the entire problem, they resort to a heuristic approach. They are also able to use optimization to solve a portion of the problem by removing one constraint and making the problem linear. (Wright et al., 2006).

A 2007 study of nurse scheduling was performed by Parr and Thompson. They point to the difficulty of satisfying all the constraints in the nursing problem due to

multiple objectives, however they proceed to examine two methods of linear optimization: stepwise allocation of weights (SAWing) and the noising method. Noising consists of “varying the cost function during a search by adding random error (noise) to the data.” They found that using their datasets and methods, particularly the noising method, “produced better solutions than those produced manually,” pointing to the value of optimization techniques for scheduling problems. (Parr and Thompson, 2007).

Spreadsheet-based Tools for Optimization

Another area of interest in performing a review of prior studies was related to using Microsoft Excel and Solver to approach the current research.

In 2003, Kuo, Schroeder, Mahaffey and Bollinger performed a study that optimized the scheduling of hospital operating rooms using constraint-based optimization methods, specifically using Excel Solver. The authors use methods and tools that “commonly used in the field of management science and are taught to first-year students in MBA courses.” The objective function they used was financial profit. Their analysis illustrated that Solver could yield real business solutions to significantly increase profit through optimized scheduling, however their variables and constraints were limited and the problem was strictly linear. (Kuo et al, 2003).

A 2008 study by McCullough and Heiser point to ongoing deficiencies related to statistical functions within Excel 2007. Among the weaknesses, they point to Solver difficulties with non-linear optimization. In their tests, they compare Solver solutions to known solutions and find that the tool is accurate for “16 of the 27 nonlinear problems.” (McCullough and Heiser, 2008). Their research clearly pointed at the need for caution with Excel based non-linear models.

Herve Thiriez examined the use of Microsoft Excel as a tool for teaching Operations Research concepts. He points to many advantages of using this ubiquitous tool, while at the same time he warns the reader about Excel's solver accuracy on non-linear problems. Solver uses a "gradient method and therefore finds local optima" for non-linear problems and for linear problems, results can sometimes be inaccurate. Thiriez notes however that "such problems have also been observed with some specialized LP packages", pointing out that problems are not unique to Excel. (Thiriez, 2001).

In 1994, David Ashley developed a librarian staffing model using a spreadsheet based solver- in this case it was Lotus 123 with the add-in "What's Best!" The solution was scalable to a larger number of staff, with the only limitation being the maximum number of variables supported by the software package. While this was not a 24 x 7 continuous operating environment, it serves as a clear example of linear programming to create schedules, all while using common business tools. (Ashley, 1994). What's Best! is also available for Microsoft Excel, but at significant cost.

Chapter 3 – Procedure and Methodology

This chapter outlines the process used in the research, including the six fundamental steps of modeling: identifying the purpose, collecting information, formulating the model, validating the model, exercising the model, and reporting results.

Identifying the Purpose

The purpose of this research and modeling was identified by the author through the course of managing a team of technicians in a NOCC environment. It was observed that a variety of shift scheduling theories and practices were used by peer managers, however there was no definitive answer about the best approach and there were not any quantitative methods to help make decisions about staff scheduling. Therefore, the need for quantitative methods and data to support scheduling decisions drove this research.

Collecting Information

A variety of information was then collected. This author gathered information from peer groups about what shifts were used for their operation and how well the shifts were working. Information was gathered about why managers chose particular shifts and how they determined the right number of people at any given time. This author also performed a survey to collect hard data from employees concerning their shift preferences.

A literature review was performed to learn what research was performed previously around quantitative tools for scheduling in telecommunications or other similar environments.

An interview with a financial analyst was performed to learn how headcount budgets were being determined and how cost drivers were being tracked. Financial cost

information was gathered, to include items such as shift pay differentials and fully loaded technician costs.

Formulating the Model

From information gathered about current scheduling practices, it became clear that finding objective and reliable drivers for NOCC staffing models is particularly challenging and dynamic. Instead of using drivers to calculate the desired staffing levels for a control center, this author arrived at two approaches for modeling that would offer insights for how to allocate staff amongst different shifts:

1. An optimization problem with low total labor cost being the objective.

This allows the user to specify the number of people needed on each of the various hours, then observe how cost varies as different shifts are used.

This helps to quantify the cost of accommodating employee preferences.

2. An optimization model seeking to minimize the variance (nonlinear objective) of human resource utilization between the 168 hours of a week. This tool allows the user to input work drivers and the total staff available, with the output being the optimal allocation of particular shifts that would best serve the work demand that is offered.

For both approaches, detailed algebraic formulations were created to design the constraints and parameters involved. These algebraic formulations were then implemented as Microsoft Excel Solver models. Excel Solver was selected due to its ubiquitous availability and low cost.

Validating the Model

The validation process included two aspects: checking formulas and gauging model outputs against reality.

This author manually verified that totals were being calculated correctly and that formulas were correct. As problems appeared, debugging was performed to correct the models.

Model outputs were examined and compared to the constraints and were also considered against actual industry experience. The model rendered realistic solutions.

Exercising the Model

The two models were exercised through repeated runs using Excel Solver. The model with the low labor cost objective was the predominant focus with repeated runs to observe the effects of turning shifts on and off and how cost was affected by introducing different staffing needs. Run durations were also observed and recorded.

Reporting Results

Chapter 4 includes a full report of results from the modeling research. Results discussed include the following sections: findings from information gathering on employee preferences, an examination of each of the two models, and a discussion on the suitability of the hardware and software platforms.

For each of the models, the results include detail about the user interface, algebraic formulations and what was learned from modeling iterations.

Chapter 4 – Results

This research produced results in four categories and each is discussed in this chapter. First, a section on employee preferences for shift scheduling includes survey results and a brief analysis of the responses. Second, there is a significant discussion of a model that performs linear optimization while minimizing total labor cost and how that was implemented in Excel Solver. Included third is discussion of a model for nonlinear optimization while minimizing variance of resource utilization. Finally, this chapter briefly addresses the suitability of the software application and hardware platform.

Employee Preferences for Shift Scheduling

It was important to answer some questions about employee preferences to help shape the shift options in the optimization models. A brief survey was conducted for NOCC employees. The survey tool used was an internal company survey engine that allows for anonymous responses. Figure 2 shows the exact questions that the employees saw and the possible responses that the employees could select.

<u>Survey question</u>	<u>Possible answers</u>	<u>Qty of responses</u>
What shift do you work?	Midshift	13
	Dayshift	11
	Nightshift	4
Which one would you prefer?	Work five 8-hour shifts from Thurs to Mon	10
	Work four 10-hour shifts from Fri to Mon	18
Which days off would you prefer?	Tues and Wed consecutive days	23
	Tues and Saturday off	5
Which days off would you prefer?	Tues and Sundays off	6
	Tues and Wed consecutive days	22
Which one is more important to you?	To have Sundays off	19
	To have Saturdays off	6
	To have Fridays off	3

Figure 2: Shift preference survey questions and responses

Out of 28 responses received, some preferences emerge:

- When the choice is between consecutive days off in the middle of the week and non-consecutive days off including one weekend day, approximately 80% prefer to have consecutive days off.
- When having to work through the weekend, 64% prefer four days of 10-hour shifts as opposed to five days of eight-hour shifts.
- Approximately 70% of respondents want Sundays off as opposed to Saturdays or Fridays.

Some of the survey results reinforce the experienced-based knowledge of the control center managers, some are not as evident. Clearly consecutive days off are important, even if they occur in the middle of a week. The preference for working four days of 10-hours shifts across the weekend instead of five days of eight-hour shifts across the weekend is clearly the majority but was less of a majority than this author would have previously believed. The strong preference towards having Sundays versus Saturdays off was also somewhat unexpected and offers insight to help when assigning shifts.

Approach #1 Linear Optimization Minimizing Total Labor Cost

The first approach researched starts with the assumption that the minimum number of people required at any given time is known, but determines how many total employees are required and what shifts they should work. Typically, a supervisor will have recent experience that tells them the minimum number of staff members that are required on a given shift. Here is an example of what a supervisor might specify:

Group minimum staffing at any given time, M-F day shift = 11:

Technology A	Technology B	Technology C	Technology D
2	1.5 (need total 3 between technology B and C)	1.5 (need total 3 between technology B and C)	6

This approach is performed as an optimization problem using the scenario set up in the Excel Solver tool, with low total labor cost being the objective. Total labor is based on a calculation that considers the loaded hourly cost per hour per employee as well as the additional shift differentials which are traditionally present as an incentive for employees to work non-traditional hours.

The variables used are defined below:

hrlylabor \equiv Loaded labor cost per hour for NOCC technicians

swingdiff \equiv Hourly pay differential for swing shift = 10%

midsdiff \equiv Hourly pay differential for midshift (graveyard) = 15%

hc_h \equiv Total headcount working during hour h

hcm_{in}_h \equiv The minimum number of people required for staffing at hour h

days1, days2, days3, etc. \equiv Number of personnel working that particular day shift, with shifts defined in table below.

swings1, swings2, swings3, etc. \equiv Number of personnel working that particular swing shift, with shifts defined in table below.

mids1, mids2, mids3, etc. \equiv Number of personnel working that particular mid shift, with shifts defined in the table below

A large number of shift options were considered and are defined in Figure 3 below:

	Weekdays	Midshift Hours/Shiftname	Dayshift Hours/Shiftname	Swingshift Hours/Shiftname
5 X 8's	Mon – Fri	11pm to 7am- Mids1	7am to 3pm- Days1	3pm to 11pm- Swings1
5 X 8's	Tues – Sat	Mids2	Days2	Swings2
5 X 8's	Wed – Sun	Mids3	Days3	Swings3
5 X 8's	Th – Mon	Mids4	Days4	Swings4
5 X 8's	Fri – Tues	Mids5	Days5	Swings5
5 X 8's	Sat – Wed	Mids6	Days6	Swings6
5 X 8's	Sun – Th	Mids7	Days7	Swings7
4 X 10's	Mon – Th	11pm to 9am- Mids8	7am to 5pm- Days8	3pm to 1am- Swings8
4 X 10's	Tues – Fri	Mids9	Days9	Swings9
4 X 10's	Wed – Sat	Mids10	Days10	Swings10
4 X 10's	Th – Sun	Mids11	Days11	Swings11
4 X 10's	Fri – Mon	Mids12	Days12	Swings12
4 X 10's	Sat – Tues	Mids13	Days13	Swings13
4 X 10's	Sun – Wed	Mids14	Days14	Swings14
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Tues & Sat off	11pm to 7am- Mids15	7am to 3pm- Days15	3pm to 11pm- Swings15
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Wed & Sat off	Mids16	Days16	Swings16
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Thurs & Sat off	Mids17	Days17	Swings17
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Tues & Sun off	Mids18	Days18	Swings18
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Wed & Sun off	Mids19	Days19	Swings19
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Thurs & Sun off	Mids20	Days20	Swings20
3x13 1/3's		6PM to 7:20 AM- Mids21 Fri morn, Sat morn, Sun morn	6AM to 7:20 PM- Days21 Thurs, Fri, Sat	

Figure 3: Shift options used in linear optimization model

The objective function used was to minimize total cost:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{dayscost} + \text{swingscost} + \text{midscost} \\ &= (\text{HCh values for days}) \times \text{hrlylabor} \\ & \quad + (\text{HCh values for swings}) \times \text{hrlylabor} \times (\text{swingdiff} + 1.00) \\ & \quad + (\text{HCh values for mids}) \times \text{hrlylabor} \times (\text{midsdiff} + 1.00) \end{aligned}$$

Constraints include the following:

$$\text{swingdiff}, \text{midsdiff}, \text{hrlylabor} \geq 0 \quad \text{constants}$$

$$hc_h, hc_{\min_h} \geq 0 \quad \forall h$$

$$\text{mids1}, \text{mids2} \dots \text{mids20}, \text{mids21} \geq 0$$

$$\text{days1}, \text{days2} \dots \text{days20}, \text{days21} \geq 0$$

$$\text{swings1}, \text{swings2} \dots \text{swings19}, \text{swings20} \geq 0$$

$$hc_h \geq hc_{\min_h} \quad \forall h \quad (\text{must have at least minimum personnel each hour})$$

h has a range of 0 to 167 (168 hours in one week)

The full algebraic formulation is contained in Appendix A, including a table which shows which shifts span which hours of the week.

Implementation of Approach #1 in Excel and Solver

The actual implementation of the optimization tool is shown below. Parameters of loaded labor rate, swing shift pay differential and midshift pay differential can be modified by the user and are shown in gray in Figure 4. Throughout this research, values of 10% differential for swing shift and 15% for midshift were used. A loaded labor rate of \$55.00 is intended to reflect the technician hourly pay, benefits, information technology cost allocations, and other incidental costs of employment.

The tool displays the calculations for the labor costs per shift and seeks to minimize the total labor cost (the objective function) as shown in the oval.

For each hour of the week, the user inputs values for the minimum required staff. This is outlined in red in Figure 4. As the tool calculates the optimal shift schedules, the tool auto sums and displays how many people will actually be working during each hour to compare to the minimum required staffing, as shown in the “Computed Staff HC” column.

Loaded labor per hour:	\$55.00
Swing shift differential:	0.10
Midshift differential:	0.15

Midshift Labor Cost:	\$5,313.00
Dayshift Labor Cost:	\$17,160.00
Swingshift Labor Cost:	\$7,260.00
Minimized Total Labor Cost:	\$29,733.00

Hour of day, starting at:	Sunday			Monday			Tuesday		
	Hour of Week	Min Staff	Computed Staff HC _h	Hour of Week	Min Staff	Computed Staff HC _h	Hour of Week	Min Staff	Computed Staff HC _h
12 AM Midnight	0	2	2.00	24	2	2.00	48	2	2.00
1:00 AM	1	2	2.00	25	2	2.00	49	2	2.00
2:00 AM	2	2	2.00	26	2	2.00	50	2	2.00
3:00 AM	3	2	2.00	27	2	2.00	51	2	2.00
4:00 AM	4	2	2.00	28	2	2.00	52	2	2.00
5:00 AM	5	2	2.00	29	2	2.00	53	2	2.00

Figure 4: Extract of input and output fields of cost minimization model

The tool also includes the option to exclude or include a particular shift. This is shown in gray/blue in Figure 5. The extract shown only displays midshift, but the same fields also exist for the dayshifts and swingshifts. If a shift is particularly unpopular or if the user wants to see the cost impact of including or excluding a set of shift options, one or more shifts can be excluded from the optimization to measure the resulting total cost in dollars and total headcount. For example, if one considers the employee preference survey discussed earlier in this chapter, it indicates a strong preference for consecutive days off, therefore shifts that include non-consecutive days off might be excluded by the user. If a shift should be excluded as a possibility, the value can be manually set to “0.”

In the example in Figure 5, in gray/blue, all of the midshift shift options have a value of “1” and therefore are considered possibilities for the optimization.

Shift Description	Midshift			
	Midshift Hours/Shiftname	Use shift in calculation?	Solver Parameter	Optimal # of ppl working this shift
Mon – Fri 5x8's	11pm to 7am- Mids1	1	0.0000	0.0000
Tues – Sat 5x8's	Mids2	1	0.0000	0.0000
Wed – Sun 5x8's	Mids3	1	1.0000	1.0000
Th – Mon 5x8's	Mids4	1	0.0000	0.0000
Fri – Tues 5x8's	Mids5	1	1.0000	1.0000
Sat – Wed 5x8's	Mids6	1	0.0000	0.0000
Sun – Th 5x8's	Mids7	1	0.0000	0.0000
Mon – Th 4x10's	11pm to 9am- Mids8	1	1.0000	1.0000
Tues – Fri 4x10's	Mids9	1	0.0000	0.0000
Wed – Sat 4x10's	Mids10	1	0.0000	0.0000
Th – Sun 4x10's	Mids11	1	0.0000	0.0000
Fri – Mon 4x10's	Mids12	1	0.0000	0.0000
Sat – Tues 4x10's	Mids13	1	0.0000	0.0000
Sun – Wed 4x10's	Mids14	1	0.0000	0.0000
Tues & Sat off 5x8's non-consec	11pm to 7am- Mids15	1	0.0000	0.0000
Wed & Sat off 5x8's non-consec	Mids16	1	0.0000	0.0000
Thurs & Sat off 5x8's non-consec	Mids17	1	0.0000	0.0000
Tues & Sun off 5x8's non-consec	Mids18	1	0.0000	0.0000
Wed & Sun off 5x8's non-consec	Mids19	1	0.0000	0.0000
Thurs & Sun off 5x8's non-consec	Mids20	1	0.0000	0.0000
3x13 1/3's	6PM to 7:20 AM Fri, Sat & Sun morn- Mids21	1	0.0000	0.0000

3.0000

Figure 5: Fields used in shift toggling and displaying shift counts

Exercising the Model

After all input variables have been set by the user, the user executes the model using Solver. Figure 6 is a screenshot of the Solver Parameters dialog box where the user sets the objective function, defines the adjustable parameters and defines the constraints that match the algebraic formulation. Figure 7 is a screenshot of a secondary dialog box, the Solver Options, where the user specifies non-negative (part of the constraints in the algebraic formula) and that the model is linear.

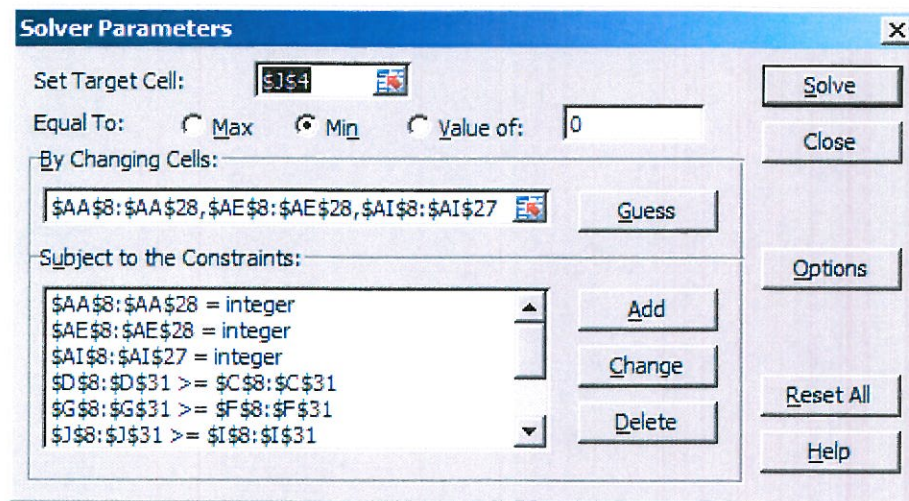


Figure 6: Solver parameters dialog box

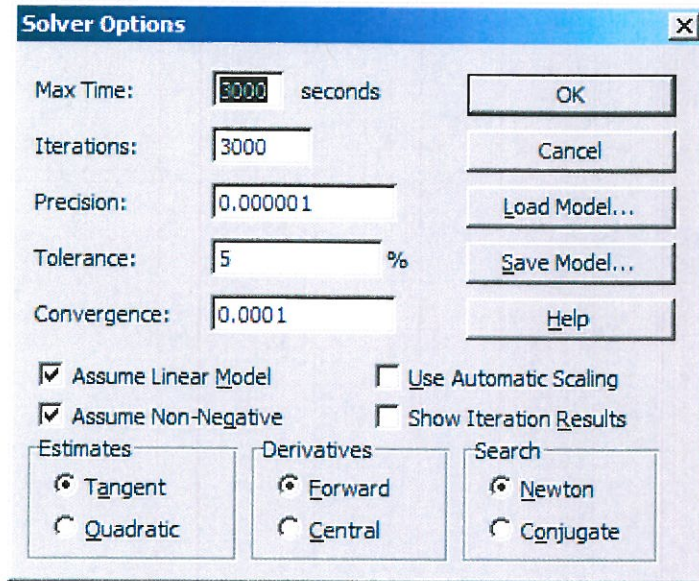


Figure 7: Solver options dialog box

Quantifying the Cost of Accommodating Employee Preferences

The Figure 5 also shows “Optimal # of ppl working this shift” fields which are the results of the optimization and are the primary outputs of the tool. These fields contain the data that a manager would utilize in helping to form an employee schedule.

In this particular example, the tool output indicates that, for the midshift, the optimal solution to minimize cost and yet still have the required minimum headcount for each hour would be to use:

- One person working five shifts of eight hours each on Wednesday through Sunday.
- One person working five shifts of eight hours each on Friday through Tuesday.
- One person working four shifts of 10 hours each on Monday through Thursday.

This example includes two unpopular shifts that force the technician to have days off mid week instead of on the weekend. It is then useful to do comparisons in order to

understand the cost of accommodating employee preference in the interest of helping NOCC management in the decision-making process.

In this example, all shifts are considered “fair game” and the total labor cost for all day, mid and swing shifts is \$29,733 for 13 headcount as calculated by the optimization tool. If non-consecutive day off shifts are excluded from consideration, there is no change in cost, it remains at \$29,733 for 13 headcount. If all 10-hour shifts and non-consecutive day off shifts are excluded, 13 headcount are still required but the total cost is slightly higher at \$29,788 due to differences in shift pay differential. If the user excludes the most unpopular shifts: non-consecutive days off and shifts that include working both Saturday and Sunday, then 16 headcount are required at a cost of \$36,905.

This is significant as it starts to quantify the cost of accommodating employee preferences. There is no cost to excluding non-consecutive day off shifts; that employee preference is “free” in this particular scenario. However, the cost difference between “all shifts are fair game” and excluding shifts that include working both Saturday and Sunday is three headcount, and $\$36,905 - \$29,733 = \$7172$ per week. It is then expedient for NOCC management to determine if \$7172 per week is money well spent to boost morale (and possibly productivity) and to decrease employee turnover costs. Quantifying morale impacts and turnover costs are not within the scope of this research and would vary by workgroup, local culture and current economic conditions.

Each of the calculations discussed above required less than one minute for Solver to obtain the solution.

The example used here assumed that a minimum staffing of four people was needed at all times Monday through Friday from 7AM to 7PM and a minimum of two

people was needed at all other hours of the week. This is but one scenario and the cost of accommodating employee shift preference would vary greatly depending on how the minimum staffing per hour of the week is specified. The tool can be readily modified to match the actual resource needs of the NOCC environment.

Validating Particular Shift Options

Within the author's workplace, there were two shift types that caused debate as to the cost efficiency of the shifts. One is the practice of utilizing 10-hour shifts. Simple consideration would cause concern about inefficiency stemming from employee redundancies, as compared to eight hour shifts, because three shifts of eight hours each have no overlap during a given day yet three shifts of 10 hours each have significant overlap. In the example previously discussed, if 10-hour shifts are eliminated as an option, the labor cost actually rises by \$55 a week, pointing to the validity of 10 hour shifts.

The other practice that was debated is the use of a shift that uses three shifts of 13.33 hours each to cover weekend work. If one technician's worth of continual coverage capacity is needed on the weekend, one person works the daytime equivalent of this shift and one person works the nighttime equivalent of this shift and they only work the weekend. Only two shifts provide coverage as opposed to three shifts and while the worker has to work the whole weekend, their entire "workweek" is completed in approximately three days. Using the optimization tool, if one excludes all of the shifts that work weekend days except the 13.33 hour special shift, then 14 total headcount are required at a total labor cost of \$32,208. While this represents a \$2475 increase per week over the "all shifts are fair game" option, it offers an opportunity to accommodate

employee preferences for not working weekends (except for four employees on the special shift) at what may be considered a reasonable cost.

Approach #2- Nonlinear Optimization Minimizing Variance of Resource Utilization

The second approach that was researched assumes that the total number of staff is known and constant and that full utilization of the personnel is desired. Using hourly incoming alarm volume as an indicator of relative work volume between the hours of the day, this model seeks to even out the utilization of personnel across the week. Hourly alarm data is an objective indicator of network faults and it is easily derived from software queries of NOCC operational support systems. This approach is also set up as an optimization model within the Excel Solver tool and it seeks to minimize the variance (nonlinear objective) of human resource utilization between the 168 hours of a week.

The variables for this model are defined below:

maxhd \equiv Maximum headcount available

avol_h \equiv Alarm volume at hour h of the week
(h = 0, 1, 2, ...165, 166, 167)

hc_h \equiv Total headcount working during hour h

util_h \equiv Alarms per person at hour h of the week, utilization
= avol_h / hc_h for (h = 0, 1, 2, ...165, 166, 167)

meanutil \equiv Mean utilization $\equiv \overline{\text{util}} \equiv \frac{1}{168} \sum_{h=0}^{167} \text{util}_h$

mincover_h \equiv The minimum number of people required to at hour h

As compared to the model in Approach #1, a reduced subset of shift options was used and these are defined in Figure 8. Shift options were decreased to make the optimization problem more computationally feasible.

	Weekdays	Midshift Hours/Shiftname	Dayshift Hours/Shiftname	Swingshift Hours/Shiftname
5 X 8's	Mon – Fri	11pm to 7am- Mids1	7am to 3pm- Days1	3pm to 11pm- Swings1
5 X 8's	Tues – Sat	Mids2	Days2	Swings2
5 X 8's	Wed – Sun	Mids3	Days3	Swings3
5 X 8's	Th – Mon	Mids4	Days4	Swings4
5 X 8's	Fri – Tues	Mids5	Days5	Swings5
5 X 8's	Sat – Wed	Mids6	Days6	Swings6
5 X 8's	Sun – Th	Mids7	Days7	Swings7
4 X 10's	Mon – Th	11pm to 9am- Mids8	7am to 5pm- Days8	3pm to 1am- Swings8
4 X 10's	Tues – Fri	Mids9	Days9	Swings9
4 X 10's	Wed – Sat	Mids10	Days10	Swings10
4 X 10's	Th – Sun	Mids11	Days11	Swings11
4 X 10's	Fri – Mon	Mids12	Days12	Swings12
4 X 10's	Sat – Tues	Mids13	Days13	Swings13
4 X 10's	Sun – Wed	Mids14	Days14	Swings14

Figure 8: Shift options used for nonlinear optimization model

The objective function is to minimize variance in headcount utilization from hour to hour, in essence maximizing efficiency by reducing wasted resources

$$\text{Variance} = \sigma^2 = \frac{1}{168} \cdot \sum_{h=0}^{167} (\text{util}_h - \text{meanutil})^2$$

The constraints include the following:

$$\text{maxhd, mincover} \geq 0$$

$$\text{hc}_h, \text{avol}_h \geq 0 \quad \forall h$$

$$\text{mids1, mids2} \dots \text{mids13, mids14} \geq 0$$

$$\text{days1, days2} \dots \text{days13, days14} \geq 0$$

$$\text{swings1, swings2} \dots \text{swings13, swings14} \geq 0$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^{14} (\text{mids}(i) + \text{days}(i) + \text{swings}(i)) = \text{maxhd} \quad (\text{all headcount are used})$$

$$\text{hc}_h \geq \text{mincover} \quad \forall h \quad (\text{must have at least minimum personnel each hour})$$

The full algebraic formulation, including a table of what shifts span which hours of the week, is contained in Appendix B.

Implementation of Approach #2 in Excel and Solver

This author created the optimization model in Excel with all constraints as designed; however, Solver was insufficient to solve the optimization problem.

Solver is not able to handle all of the constraints in the algebraic formula.

Specifically, Solver returned errors as a result of the constraints which ensure that the computed headcount is greater than or equal to the minimum coverage:

$$hc_h \geq \text{mincover} \quad \forall_h$$

The error encountered is shown in Figure 9.

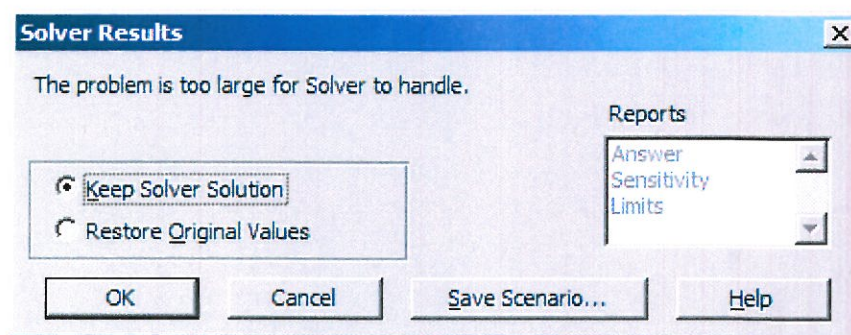


Figure 9: Solver results window for nonlinear model.

By deleting the minimum coverage constraints, as shown in Figure 10, the model can be made to start running in Solver, but further errors occur and the output is then not valid as the model divides by zero as it iterates through possible solutions.

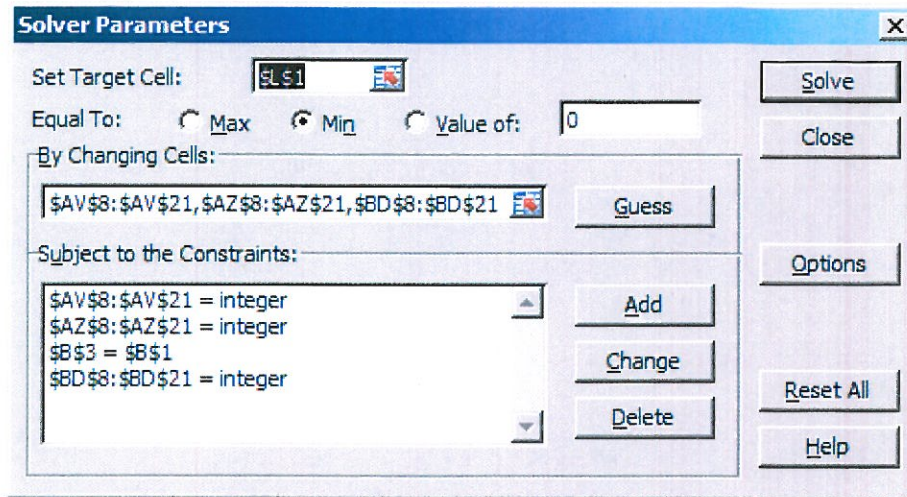


Figure 10: Solver parameters window for non linear model with reduced constraints.

Suitability of the Software Application and Hardware Platform

The platform used in this research was Microsoft Excel 2007 with the standard Solver Add-in tool. This application ran on a Dell laptop using dual core processors running at 1.83 GHz. The adequacy of this combination varied widely, based on multiple factors.

For the linear cost optimization model, when the hourly staffing had significant peaks or valleys throughout the week, a solution was typically obtained within less than 1 minute and the combination was adequate and practical for use. However, for the same model, if the desired staffing levels were flat (roughly equal across all hours of the week), Solver had extensive troubles arriving at an optimal solution, requiring 45 minutes or more to arrive at an optimal solution or not arriving at an optimal solution at all.

For the non-linear variance optimization model, Excel solver proved to be inadequate as it was not able to handle the large number of constraints and even when these were decreased, the tool struggled to find an optimal solution.

The weaknesses described above appear to be functions of the software package and not the computer itself.

Chapter 5 – Suggestions for Additional Work

This chapter discusses areas for further research. The wide body of research that exists on the modeling of employee schedules points to vast additional research opportunities, however this author sees particular benefit in exploring four specific areas: accounting for morale/turnover costs, further development of the utilization variance minimization model, the use of alternate software packages, and educational approaches for increasing awareness of optimization and modeling possibilities.

Accounting for Morale and Turnover Costs

In the cost optimization model used in this research, the algebraic formulation and the model itself can be readily adapted to include a factor for morale and employee turnover in the total cost calculation. If a user can assign a cost to those “soft factors” and create a linkage between unpopular shifts and morale or turnover problems, the true costs of employee preferences can be seen.

Minimizing Utilization Variance

Due to tool limitations explained in the previous chapter, this research was not able to fully explore the value of the utilization variance minimization model (also referred to as Approach #2). This model uses a principle and method that may provide value to a variety of industries. Given a fixed amount of resources currently available and the incoming demand, this technique offers a method to even out resource capacity vs. demand ratio. The principle of minimizing variance assumes what is often the case in business: that capacity cannot be increased or decreased easily and that while the current capacity exists, a primary responsibility for managers is to use the capacity efficiently.

This approach can be used beyond telecommunications and would be directly beneficial to industries where the cost or lead time of increasing or decreasing capacity is high, such as, healthcare staffing, fleets, and warehousing.

Alternate Modeling Tools

While Microsoft Excel Solver was the tool used in this research due to Solver's low cost and ready availability, there exists a large variety of modeling tools that may be more appropriate for both the linear and nonlinear models used in this research.

Through this author's review of past research and literature, it is apparent that multiple optimization and modeling packages exist, however the cost can be significant and were not appropriate to the economics of this research. By translating the nonlinear model from this current research into other software packages, the true usefulness of the model design can be determined.

Educational Approaches for Increasing Familiarity with Optimization

Quantitative methods for modeling and optimization are typically taught in graduate level courses due to the need to thoroughly understand the mathematical or statistical methods at their foundation. As a result, there is often little awareness of the methods or their value by many industry personnel. This author has observed groups making significant decisions that would have been eased and would have benefited from quantitative modeling (most likely by a consulting subject matter expert), however it was not a consideration due to lack of awareness. There may be significant value in researching methods to increase awareness about decision science capabilities at the undergraduate course level.

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Appendix A

Algebraic Formulation of Cost Objective Model

Algebraic Formulation- Cost Objective Model

Let:

- hrlylabor \equiv Loaded labor cost per hour for NOCC technicians
- swingdiff \equiv hourly pay differential for swing shift = 10%
- midsdiff \equiv hourly pay differential for midshift (graveyard) = 15%
- hc_h \equiv Total headcount working during hour h
- hemin_h \equiv The minimum number of people required for staffing at hour h
- days1, days2, days3, etc. \equiv Number of personnel working that particular day shift. Shifts defined in table below.
- swings1, swings2, swings3, etc. \equiv Number of personnel working that particular swing shift. Shifts defined in table below.
- mids1, mids2, mids3, etc. \equiv Number of personnel working that particular mid shift. Shifts defined in table below.

Shift designations are defined below:

	Weekdays	Midshift Hours/Shiftname	Dayshift Hours/Shiftname	Swingshift Hours/Shiftname
5 X 8's	Mon – Fri	11pm to 7am- Mids1	7am to 3pm- Days1	3pm to 11pm- Swings1
5 X 8's	Tues – Sat	Mids2	Days2	Swings2
5 X 8's	Wed – Sun	Mids3	Days3	Swings3
5 X 8's	Th – Mon	Mids4	Days4	Swings4
5 X 8's	Fri – Tues	Mids5	Days5	Swings5
5 X 8's	Sat – Wed	Mids6	Days6	Swings6
5 X 8's	Sun – Th	Mids7	Days7	Swings7
4 X 10's	Mon – Th	11pm to 9am- Mids8	7am to 5pm- Days8	3pm to 1am- Swings8
4 X 10's	Tues – Fri	Mids9	Days9	Swings9
4 X 10's	Wed – Sat	Mids10	Days10	Swings10
4 X 10's	Th – Sun	Mids11	Days11	Swings11
4 X 10's	Fri – Mon	Mids12	Days12	Swings12
4 X 10's	Sat – Tues	Mids13	Days13	Swings13
4 X 10's	Sun – Wed	Mids14	Days14	Swings14
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Tues & Sat off	11pm to 7am- Mids15	7am to 3pm- Days15	3pm to 11pm- Swings15
5 X 8's non-	Wed & Sat off	Mids16	Days16	Swings16

consecutive					
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Thurs & Sat off	Mids17	Days17	Swings17	
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Tues & Sun off	Mids18	Days18	Swings18	
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Wed & Sun off	Mids19	Days19	Swings19	
5 X 8's non-consecutive	Thurs & Sun off	Mids20	Days20	Swings20	
3x13 1/3's		6PM to 7:20 AM- Mids21 Fri morn, Sat morn, Sun morn	6AM to 7:20 PM- Days21 Thurs, Fri, Sat		

Let (continued):

Hours of the week (h) are defined below:

Hour of day	Sunday Hour of Week	Monday Hour of Week	Tuesday Hour of Week	Wednesday Hour of Week	Thursday Hour of Week	Friday Hour of Week	Saturday Hour of Week
12 AM	0	24	48	72	96	120	144
Midnight	1	25	49	73	97	121	145
1	2	26	50	74	98	122	146
2	3	27	51	75	99	123	147
3	4	28	52	76	100	124	148
4	5	29	53	77	101	125	149
5	6	30	54	78	102	126	150
6	7	31	55	79	103	127	151
7	8	32	56	80	104	128	152
8	9	33	57	81	105	129	153
9	10	34	58	82	106	130	154
10							
11:00 AM	11	35	59	83	107	131	155
12:00 PM	12	36	60	84	108	132	156
1:00 PM	13	37	61	85	109	133	157
2	14	38	62	86	110	134	158
3	15	39	63	87	111	135	159
4	16	40	64	88	112	136	160
5	17	41	65	89	113	137	161
6	18	42	66	90	114	138	162
7	19	43	67	91	115	139	163
8	20	44	68	92	116	140	164

Midshift
Pay
Differential

Swingshift
Pay
Differential

9	21	45	69	93	117	141	165
10	22	46	70	94	118	142	166
11:00 PM	23	47	71	95	119	143	167

O.F.:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{Min} && \text{dayscost + swingscost + midscost} && \text{Total labor cost} \\
 & && = (\text{HCh values for days}) \times \text{hrlylabor} && \\
 & && + (\text{HCh values for swings}) \times \text{hrlylabor} \times (\text{swingdiff} + 1.00) && \\
 & && + (\text{HCh values for mids}) \times \text{hrlylabor} \times (\text{midsdiff} + 1.00) &&
 \end{aligned}$$

S.T.:

$\text{swingdiff}, \text{midsdiff}, \text{hrlylabor} \geq 0$ constants
 $h_{c_h}, h_{c_{\min_h}} \geq 0 \quad \forall h$
 $\text{mids1}, \text{mids2} \dots \text{mids20}, \text{mids21} \geq 0$
 $\text{days1}, \text{days2} \dots \text{days20}, \text{days21} \geq 0$
 $\text{swings1}, \text{swings2} \dots \text{swings19}, \text{swings20} \geq 0$
 $h_{c_h} \geq h_{c_{\min_h}} \quad \forall h$ (must have at least minimum personnel each hour)

Values for h_{c_h} are defined in the table below:

h		HC_h equals summation of the following:																						
0	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	mids 7	swin gs10	swin gs11	mids 11	swin gs12	mids 12	swin gs13	mids 13	mids 14	mids 15	mids 16	mids 17	mids 21							
1	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	mids 7			mids 11		mids 12		mids 13	mids 14	mids 15	mids 16	mids 17	mids 21							
2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	mids 7			mids 11		mids 12		mids 13	mids 14	mids 15	mids 16	mids 17	mids 21							
3	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	mids 7			mids 11		mids 12		mids 13	mids 14	mids 15	mids 16	mids 17	mids 21							
4	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	mids 7			mids 11		mids 12		mids 13	mids 14	mids 15	mids 16	mids 17	mids 21							
5	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	mids 7			mids 11		mids 12		mids 13	mids 14	mids 15	mids 16	mids 17	mids 21							
6	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	mids 7			mids 11		mids 12		mids 13	mids 14	mids 15	mids 16	mids 17	mids 21							
7	days 3	days 4	days 5	days 6	days 7	days 11		mids 11	days 12	mids 12	Days 13	mids 13	mids 14	days 15	days 16	days 17								
8	days 3	days 4	days 5	days 6	days 7	days 11		mids 11	days 12	mids 12	Days 13	mids 13	mids 14	days 15	days 16	days 17								
9	days 3	days 4	days 5	days 6	days 7	days 11			days 12		Days 13		days 14	days 15	days 16	days 17								
10	days 3	days 4	days 5	days 6	days 7	days 11			days 12		Days 13		days 14	days 15	days 16	days 17								

1	1	3	days	4	days	5	days	6	days	7	days	11	days	12	Days	13	days	14	days	15	days	16	days	17		
1	2	3	days	4	days	5	days	6	days	7	days	11	days	12	Days	13	days	14	days	15	days	16	days	17		
1	3	3	days	4	days	5	days	6	days	7	days	11	days	12	Days	13	days	14	days	15	days	16	days	17		
1	4	3	days	4	days	5	days	6	days	7	days	11	days	12	Days	13	days	14	days	15	days	16	days	17		
1	5	swin	swin	gs4	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	days	11	swin	swin	Days	13	days	14	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin			
1	6	gs3	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	days	11	swin	swin	Days	13	days	14	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin			
1	7	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin			swin	swin												
1	8	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin			swin	swin												
1	9	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin			swin	swin												
2	0	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin			swin	swin												
2	1	gs3	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin			swin	swin												
2	2	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin	swin			swin	swin												
2	3	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	8	swin	swin	swin	Mids	13	mids	14	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids
2	4	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	swin	swin	swin	swin	Mids	13	mids	14	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids
2	5	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids			mids	mids	Mids	13	mids	14	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids
2	6	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids			mids	mids	Mids	13	mids	14	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids
2	7	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids			mids	mids	Mids	13	mids	14	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids
2	8	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	8	mids	mids	mids	Mids	13	mids	14	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids	mids

	gs1	gs2	gs3	gs4	gs5		gs9	gs10	gs11	gs12	gs15	gs16	gs17	gs18	gs19	gs20	s21
1	swin gs1	swin gs2	swin gs3	swin gs4	swin gs5		swin gs9	swin gs10	swin gs11	swin gs12	swin gs15	swin gs16	swin gs17	swin gs18	swin gs19	swin gs20	mid s21
4		mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	swin gs9	swin gs10	mids 11	mids 12	mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20			mid s21
3									swin gs11	swin gs12	mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20			mid s21
1	mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	swin gs9	mids 10	mids 11	mids 12		mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
4	mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6		mids 10	mids 11	mids 12		mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
4											mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
1	mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6		mids 10	mids 11	mids 12		mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
4	mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6		mids 10	mids 11	mids 12		mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
4											mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
1	mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	swin gs9	mids 10	mids 11	mids 12		mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
4	mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6		mids 10	mids 11	mids 12		mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
4											mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
1	mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6		mids 10	mids 11	mids 12		mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
4	mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6		mids 10	mids 11	mids 12		mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
4											mids 13	mids 18	mids 19	mids 20		mids 21	
1	mids 2	mids 3	mids 4	mids 5	mids 6	days 10	mids 10	mids 11	mids 12		mids 13	days 18	days 19	days 20	days 21		
5	days 2	days 3	days 4	days 5	days 6		mids 10	mids 11	mids 12	days 13	mids 13	days 18	days 19	days 20	days 21		
1											mids 13	days 18	days 19	days 20	days 21		
5	days 2	days 3	days 4	days 5	days 6	days 10	mids 10	mids 11	mids 12	days 13	mids 13	days 18	days 19	days 20	days 21		
3												days 18	days 19	days 20	days 21		
5	days 2	days 3	days 4	days 5	days 6	days 10				days 12		days 18	days 19	days 20	days 21		
4	days 2	days 3	days 4	days 5	days 6	days 10				days 12		days 18	days 19	days 20	days 21		

Appendix B

Algebraic Formulation of Variance Objective Model

Algebraic Formulation- Variance Objective Model

Let:

maxhd \equiv Maximum headcount available

avol_h \equiv Alarm volume at hour h of the week

(h = 0, 1, 2, ..., 165, 166, 167)

hc_h \equiv Total headcount working during hour h

util_h \equiv Alarms per person at hour h of the week, utilization

= avol_h / hc_h for (h = 0, 1, 2, ..., 165, 166, 167)

$$\text{meanutil} \equiv \frac{1}{168} \sum_{h=0}^{167} \text{util}_h$$

meanutil \equiv Mean utilization

mincover_h \equiv The minimum number of people required to at hour h

Shift designations are defined below:

	Weekdays	Midshift Hours/Shiftname	Dayshift Hours/Shiftname	Swingshift Hours/Shiftname
5 X 8's	Mon - Fri	11pm to 7am- Mids1	7am to 3pm- Days1	3pm to 11pm- Swings1
5 X 8's	Tues - Sat	Mids2	Days2	Swings2
5 X 8's	Wed - Sun	Mids3	Days3	Swings3
5 X 8's	Th - Mon	Mids4	Days4	Swings4
5 X 8's	Fri - Tues	Mids5	Days5	Swings5
5 X 8's	Sat - Wed	Mids6	Days6	Swings6
5 X 8's	Sun - Th	Mids7	Days7	Swings7
4 X 10's	Mon - Th	11pm to 9am- Mids8	7am to 5pm- Days8	3pm to 1am- Swings8
4 X 10's	Tues - Fri	Mids9	Days9	Swings9
4 X 10's	Wed - Sat	Mids10	Days10	Swings10
4 X 10's	Th - Sun	Mids11	Days11	Swings11
4 X 10's	Fri - Mon	Mids12	Days12	Swings12
4 X 10's	Sat - Tues	Mids13	Days13	Swings13
4 X 10's	Sun - Wed	Mids14	Days14	Swings14

Let (continued):

Hours of the week (h) are defined below:

Hour of day	Sunday Hour of Week	Monday Hour of Week	Tuesday Hour of Week	Wednesday Hour of Week	Thursday Hour of Week	Friday Hour of Week	Saturday Hour of Week
12 AM	0	24	48	72	96	120	144
Midnight	1	25	49	73	97	121	145
	2	26	50	74	98	122	146
	3	27	51	75	99	123	147
	4	28	52	76	100	124	148
	5	29	53	77	101	125	149
	6	30	54	78	102	126	150
	7	31	55	79	103	127	151
	8	32	56	80	104	128	152
	9	33	57	81	105	129	153
	10	34	58	82	106	130	154
11:00 AM	11	35	59	83	107	131	155
12:00 PM	12	36	60	84	108	132	156
1:00 PM	13	37	61	85	109	133	157
	14	38	62	86	110	134	158
	15	39	63	87	111	135	159
	16	40	64	88	112	136	160
	17	41	65	89	113	137	161
	18	42	66	90	114	138	162
	19	43	67	91	115	139	163
	20	44	68	92	116	140	164
	21	45	69	93	117	141	165

10	22	46	70	94	118	142	166
11:00 PM	23	47	71	95	119	143	167

O.F.:

$$\text{Variance} = \sigma^2 = \frac{1}{168} \cdot \sum_{h=0}^{167} (\text{util}_h - \text{meanutil})^2$$

Min

Minimizing variance in headcount utilization from hour to hour, in essence maximizing efficiency by reducing wasted resources

S.T.:

$$\begin{aligned} \maxhd, \mincover &\geq 0 \\ hc_h, avol_h &\geq 0 \quad \forall h \\ mids1, mids2 \dots mids13, mids14 &\geq 0 \\ days1, days2 \dots days13, days14 &\geq 0 \\ swings1, swings2 \dots swings13, swings14 &\geq 0 \\ \sum_{i=1}^{14} (mids(i) + days(i) + swings(i)) &= \maxhd \end{aligned}$$

(all headcount are used)

$hc_h \geq \mincover \quad \forall h$ (must have at least minimum personnel each hour)

Values for hc_h are defined in the table below:

HCh equals summation of the following:													
h	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids7	swings10	swings11	mids11	swings12	mids12	swings13	mids13	mids14
0	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids7	swings10	swings11	mids11	swings12	mids12	swings13	mids13	mids14
1	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids7			mids11		mids12		mids13	mids14
2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids7			mids11		mids12		mids13	mids14
3	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids7			mids11		mids12		mids13	mids14
4	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids7			mids11		mids12		mids13	mids14
5	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids7			mids11		mids12		mids13	mids14
6	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids7			mids11		mids12		mids13	mids14
7	days3	days4	days5	days6	days7	days11		mids11	days12	mids12	days13	mids13	mids14
8	days3	days4	days5	days6	days7	days11		mids11	days12	mids12	days13	mids13	mids14
9	days3	days4	days5	days6	days7	days11			days12		days13		
10	days3	days4	days5	days6	days7	days11			days12		days13		
11	days3	days4	days5	days6	days7	days11			days12		days13		

39	swings1	swings4	swings5	swings6	swings7	days8	swings8	days12	swings12	days13	swings13	days14	swings14
40	swings1	swings4	swings5	swings6	swings7	days8	swings8	days12	swings12	days13	swings13	days14	swings14
41	swings1	swings4	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8		swings12		swings13		swings14
42	swings1	swings4	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8		swings12		swings13		swings14
43	swings1	swings4	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8		swings12		swings13		swings14
44	swings1	swings4	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8		swings12		swings13		swings14
45	swings1	swings4	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8		swings12		swings13		swings14
46	swings1	swings4	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8		swings12		swings13		swings14
47	mids1	mids2	mids5	mids6	mids7	mids8	swings8	mids9	swings12	mids13	swings13	mids14	swings14
48	mids1	mids2	mids5	mids6	mids7	swings8	mids8	swings12	mids9	swings13	mids13	swings14	mids14
49	mids1	mids2	mids5	mids6	mids7		mids8		mids9		mids13		mids14
50	mids1	mids2	mids5	mids6	mids7		mids8		mids9		mids13		mids14
51	mids1	mids2	mids5	mids6	mids7		mids8		mids9		mids13		mids14
52	mids1	mids2	mids5	mids6	mids7		mids8		mids9		mids13		mids14
53	mids1	mids2	mids5	mids6	mids7		mids8		mids9		mids13		mids14
54	mids1	mids2	mids5	mids6	mids7		mids8		mids9		mids13		mids14
55	days1	days2	days5	days6	days7	days8	mids8	days9	mids9	days13	mids13	days14	mids14
56	days1	days2	days5	days6	days7	days8	mids8	days9	mids9	days13	mids13	days14	mids14
57	days1	days2	days5	days6	days7	days8		days9		days13		days14	
58	days1	days2	days5	days6	days7	days8		days9		days13		days14	
59	days1	days2	days5	days6	days7	days8		days9		days13		days14	
60	days1	days2	days5	days6	days7	days8		days9		days13		days14	

61	days1	days2	days5	days6	days7	days8	days9	days13	days14		
62	days1	days2	days5	days6	days7	days8	days9	days13	days14		
63	swings1	swings2	swings5	swings6	swings7	days8	swings8	swings9	days14	swings14	
64	swings1	swings2	swings5	swings6	swings7	days8	swings8	swings13	days14	swings14	
65	swings1	swings2	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings13		swings14	
66	swings1	swings2	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings13		swings14	
67	swings1	swings2	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings13		swings14	
68	swings1	swings2	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings13		swings14	
69	swings1	swings2	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings13		swings14	
70	swings1	swings2	swings5	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings13		swings14	
71	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids6	mids7	mids8	mids9	mids10	mids14	swings14	
72	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids6	mids7	swings8	swings9	swings13	swings14	mids14	
73	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids6	mids7	mids8	mids9	mids10	mids14	mids14	
74	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids6	mids7	mids8	mids9	mids10	mids14	mids14	
75	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids6	mids7	mids8	mids9	mids10	mids14	mids14	
76	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids6	mids7	mids8	mids9	mids10	mids14	mids14	
77	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids6	mids7	mids8	mids9	mids10	mids14	mids14	
78	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids6	mids7	mids8	mids9	mids10	mids14	mids14	
79	days1	days2	days3	days6	days7	days8	days9	days10	days14	mids14	
80	days1	days2	days3	days6	days7	days8	days9	days10	days14	mids14	
81	days1	days2	days3	days6	days7	days8	days9	days10	days14	mids14	
82	days1	days2	days3	days6	days7	days8	days9	days10	days14	mids14	

83	days1	days2	days3	days6	days7	days8	days9	days10	days14		
84	days1	days2	days3	days6	days7	days8	days9	days10	days14		
85	days1	days2	days3	days6	days7	days8	days9	days10	days14		
86	days1	days2	days3	days6	days7	days8	days9	days10	days14		
87	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings6	swings7	days8	swings8	swings9	days14	swings14	
88	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings6	swings7	days8	swings8	swings9	days14	swings14	
89	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings9		swings14	
90	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings9		swings14	
91	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings9		swings14	
92	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings9		swings14	
93	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings9		swings14	
94	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings6	swings7		swings8	swings9		swings14	
95	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids7	mids8	swings8	swings9	mids11	swings14	
96	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids7	swings8	mids9	swings10	swings14	mids11	
97	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids7		mids9	mids10		mids11	
98	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids7		mids9	mids10		mids11	
99	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids7		mids9	mids10		mids11	
100	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids7		mids9	mids10		mids11	
101	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids7		mids9	mids10		mids11	
102	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids7		mids9	mids10		mids11	
103	days1	days2	days3	days4	days7	days8	days9	days10	days11	days11	
104	days1	days2	days3	days4	days7	days8	days9	days10	days11	days11	

105	days1	days2	days3	days4	days7	days8	days9	days10	days11		
106	days1	days2	days3	days4	days7	days8	days9	days10	days11		
107	days1	days2	days3	days4	days7	days8	days9	days10	days11		
108	days1	days2	days3	days4	days7	days8	days9	days10	days11		
109	days1	days2	days3	days4	days7	days8	days9	days10	days11		
110	days1	days2	days3	days4	days7	days8	days9	days10	days11		
111	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings7	days8	swings8	days9	swings10	days11	swings11
112	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings7	days8	swings8	days9	swings10	days11	swings11
113	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings7		swings8	swings9	swings10		swings11
114	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings7		swings8	swings9	swings10		swings11
115	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings7		swings8	swings9	swings10		swings11
116	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings7		swings8	swings9	swings10		swings11
117	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings7		swings8	swings9	swings10		swings11
118	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings7		swings8	swings9	swings10		swings11
119	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids9	swings8	mids10	swings10	mids12	swings11
120	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	swings8	swings9	mids9	swings10	mids11	mids12
121	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5			mids9		mids11	mids12
122	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5			mids9		mids11	mids12
123	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5			mids9		mids11	mids12
124	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5			mids9		mids11	mids12
125	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5			mids9		mids11	mids12

126	mids1	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5			mids9		mids10	mids11	mids12	
127	days1	days2	days3	days4	days5	days9	days10	mids9	days11	mids10	mids11	mids12	
128	days1	days2	days3	days4	days5	days9	days10	mids9	days11	mids10	mids11	mids12	
129	days1	days2	days3	days4	days5	days9	days10		days11				
130	days1	days2	days3	days4	days5	days9	days10		days11				
131	days1	days2	days3	days4	days5	days9	days10		days11				
132	days1	days2	days3	days4	days5	days9	days10		days11				
133	days1	days2	days3	days4	days5	days9	days10		days11				
134	days1	days2	days3	days4	days5	days9	days10		days11				
135	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	days9	days10	swings9	days11				
136	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	days9	days10	swings9	days11	swings10	swings11	swings12	
137	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5			swings9		swings10	swings11	swings12	
138	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5			swings9		swings10	swings11	swings12	
139	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5			swings9		swings10	swings11	swings12	
140	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5			swings9		swings10	swings11	swings12	
141	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5			swings9		swings10	swings11	swings12	
142	swings1	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5			swings9		swings10	swings11	swings12	
143		mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids10	swings9	mids11	swings10	swings11	swings12	mids13
144	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	swings9	swings10	mids10	swings11	mids11	mids12		mids13
145	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6			mids10		mids11	mids12		mids13
146	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6			mids10		mids11	mids12		mids13
147	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6			mids10		mids11	mids12		mids13

148	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6		mids10	mids11	mids12	mids13	
149	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6		mids10	mids11	mids12	mids13	
150	mids2	mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6		mids10	mids11	mids12	mids13	
151	days2	days3	days4	days5	days6	days10	mids10	days11	days12	days13	mids13
152	days2	days3	days4	days5	days6	days10	mids10	days11	days12	days13	mids13
153	days2	days3	days4	days5	days6	days10		days11	days12	days13	
154	days2	days3	days4	days5	days6	days10		days11	days12	days13	
155	days2	days3	days4	days5	days6	days10		days11	days12	days13	
156	days2	days3	days4	days5	days6	days10		days11	days12	days13	
157	days2	days3	days4	days5	days6	days10		days11	days12	days13	
158	days2	days3	days4	days5	days6	days10		days11	days12	days13	
159	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	swings6	days10	swings10	days11	days12	swings13	days13
160	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	swings6	days10	swings10	days11	days12	swings13	days13
161	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	swings6		swings10	swings11	swings12	swings13	
162	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	swings6		swings10	swings11	swings12	swings13	
163	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	swings6		swings10	swings11	swings12	swings13	
164	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	swings6		swings10	swings11	swings12	swings13	
165	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	swings6		swings10	swings11	swings12	swings13	
166	swings2	swings3	swings4	swings5	swings6		swings10	swings11	swings12	swings13	
167		mids3	mids4	mids5	mids6	mids7	swings10	mids11	mids12	swings13	mids14