How a regional barbeque powerhouse smoked out their competition with Fourth's forecasting and analytics tool.

18% lift in customer google reviews

50-100 point increase on direct labor from back of house management

1% variance to forecast for back of house

Originally launched by Darden Restaurants in Orlando, Florida, in 1999, Smokey Bones has grown to a 62-unit casual dining chain in 16 states across the East and Midwest regions. On a mission to offer the best of American Barbecue, the company boldly proclaims: "Meat is what we do." Smoky Bones truly smokes the competition as they authentically smoke all their meats, creating unique protein and meat dishes that others just can't match.

Challenge

The historical company forecast did not offer direction on where or when labor should be utilized – or a mechanism to easily assess scheduling for each unit.

- The brand struggled with having the right people at the right place and time to deliver a strong guest experience. Addressing spikes during key seasons was also a challenge.
- Checking schedules was highly inefficient, ripe for error, and challenging to effectively evaluate by restaurant.
- Inefficient back-of-house scheduling led to long waits for food which negatively impacted server tips.

Solution

Smokey Bones turned to HotSchedules from Fourth as a proven scheduling tool along with Fourth Analytics to assess restaurant productivity.

- The HotSchedules multi-function solution includes task management, staff journals, and forecasting. Customizing labor models was simple to do without a lot of front-end work. The entire system was onboarded within a handful of weeks.
- Fourth Analytics provides granular data, a snapshot of a restaurant's balance between front and back of house, and associated wage rate inflation. Tools also highlight variance in hours vs. plan – and guests per labor hour.

> "Barbecue is all about forecasting. You can't smoke a 12-hour brisket on the fly."
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> "When we really started deploying labor according to our new matrix with HotSchedules, we saw a lift in the guest experience."
>
> **Hal Lawlor**
> **President, Smokey Bones**

Result

Smokey Bones was able to turn around its staffing model and achieve its financial plan.

- **18% lift** in customer reviews on Google – increasing from a 3.9 to 4.5
- **30+ hours per week** per restaurant extracted from back-of-house.
- **Under 1% variance** to forecast for back-of-house delivered.
- **50-100 basis point improvement** on direct labor driven by back-of-house management.

Industry
Casual dining restaurants

Locations
61

Employees
3200

Product
HotSchedules
Labor Optimization
Fourth Analytics

Solutions
Workforce management
Advanced analytics

Fourth.

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