

A Smart Investment:

**The Time and Monetary Savings of
Online Scheduling Software**



Introduction

Today's society is increasingly connected to the Internet 24 hours a day. From smartphones and tablets to Web-connected laptops, it's how a growing number of people want to view information, communicate, purchase goods and conduct routine daily tasks that previously were done manually.

This includes booking their appointments and reservations for a variety of different services. Online scheduling software is a popular addition to businesses and organizations of all sizes that's truly appreciated by customers, clients, students and patients. Not only does it allow these individuals to view availability and services—and then instantly book a time—without having to pick up the phone, but it also offers the convenience of scheduling a service any time of the day, not just during normal operating hours.

The benefit to booking individuals is apparent: Happy individuals mean more return visits and more referrals, which directly influence the success of an organization.

What may not be overly apparent are the time and monetary savings an organization can expect by implementing online scheduling software into their operations.



Why Online Scheduling Software Saves Time

The process of scheduling and managing appointments and reservations, which on the surface appears as a simple and basic task, is nonetheless an important component of any organization or business that relies on accurate scheduling in their operations. It can also be a time-consuming and tedious procedure that can significantly impact how management and staff operate.

Online scheduling software is instrumental in automating the scheduling process and freeing up staff time that can be focused on more pressing responsibilities. In addition to allowing individuals to self-schedule their own appointments and reservations online, an online scheduling system can also automatically send out reminders, maintain and store appointment and contact information, and allow individuals to pay for services when they book.

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Here are ways online scheduling software saves time at organizations and businesses that utilize it:

A. Less time spent on the phone scheduling, rescheduling and canceling appointments.

The Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association (CTIA) states that the average length of a cell phone call was 1.7 minutes in 2010. While this number in itself may seem insignificant to overall operations, simply multiple it by the dozens or even hundreds of daily calls an organization or business may receive from individuals looking to schedule, reschedule or cancel their appointment or reservations. These seemingly short phone calls can quickly add up to hours of daily staff time on the phone. Additionally, the average phone call length may be higher for some organizations and businesses, which may need the extra time to gather information from the booking individual, access

details on follow-up appointments, locate open time slots, identify available staff members to perform the service, and other pertinent tasks.

- B. Less time spent replying to e-mail and voice messages.** Customers, clients, patients and students not only book their appointments and reservation by talking to a live person. They'll also send their appointment requests and inquires via e-mail or leave them on a voicemail answering system, if the organization or business permits these two options. Both require action from management or staff. Reading an e-mail or listening to a recorded voice message may take anywhere from a few seconds to a few minutes, depending on its length. The staffer must then either call the individual or reply to his or her e-mail, which also adds several minutes to the scheduling process.

Let's look at an example of how time-consuming it can be to schedule one appointment in this manner. A chain of five salons books most of its appointments over the phone, with an average of 20 appointments booked daily at each location. As many of its clients are unable to book during normal business hours, it receives an average of seven voice messages left during off-hours per site from individuals looking to book an appointment, resulting in a total of 27 appointment booked daily at each site.

Here is the breakdown of the time spent scheduling appointment requests left on each site's voice mail system:

- One minute to listen to each voice message.
- 2.5 minutes needed to book each appointment.

Each site spends approximately 24.5 minutes daily booking these appointments. Add that to the 50 minutes needed for the other 20 appointments booked daily, and each site spends 74.5 minutes daily scheduling appointments. That's a total of 372.5 minutes daily for the chain of five salons.

C. Less time spent on appointment reminders.

Appointment reminders are effective in keeping appointment slots full, as studies have shown that they can reduce the “no-show” rate by as much as 70-percent. They also require a considerable amount of staff time to conduct and manage, which is why some businesses and organizations have ceased sending these.



As with scheduling appointments over the phone and replying via e-mail, each individual action may take only a minute or two to accomplish, but they quickly add up, based on their frequency. Additionally, some reminder phone calls may take several minutes if the called individual wants to reschedule his or her time or has additional questions or inquiries.

D. Less time spent managing appointment/reservation information in a paper appointment book, electronic calendar, spreadsheet, file or other document. The scheduling process involves more than just confirming an appointment or reservation time over the phone or replying to an e-mail message. It also requires accurate record-keeping of booked appointments and reservations, as well as contact information, details or other pertinent information. For organizations and businesses that manually input and manage this data in a paper appointment book, spreadsheet, file or other document, a certain amount of staff time must be devoted to this task.

E. Less time spent processing payments. Many organizations and businesses require payment for services offered, which means the appointment and reservation process does not end once a time is booked or a service performed. If payment cannot be made at the time an appointment or reservation is booked and processed automatically,

customer data must be manually extracted from the document housing it and payment manually processed.

Why Online Scheduling Saves Money

As the saying goes, “Time is money.” That’s certainly the case when it comes to scheduling appointments. By digging a bit deeper into their operational processes, organizations and businesses quickly realize that inefficient scheduling processes not only waste time, but can also cost the entity monetarily. Most of the time commitments and staff commitments of a manual appointment- or reservation-scheduling process can be measured in dollars. Here are ways online scheduling software saves money at organizations and businesses that utilize it:

- A. It keeps a business or organization open 24 hours a day.** The Internet has created a 24-hour world where people book their appointments and reservations at any hour of the day, not just during normal operating hours. A business or organization that does not offer a way for customers, clients, patients and students to book their services during off hours risks losing business to competitors that do offer it. Cisco Systems predicts that the number of network-connected devices will be more than 15 billion by 2015. This is twice the world’s population, and a good indication that sales from online bookings will be a factor in the success of a business or organization.

- B. It reduces “no-shows” and keeps appointment slots full.** Unused appointment and reservation slots mean lost revenue. And “no-shows” that fail to appear for their scheduled service compounds this dilemma. These are slots that could have been used by other individuals, who would also have paid for services rendered. As mentioned above, appointment reminders can reduce the no-show rate by as much as 70 percent. An e-mail or text message reminder sent automatically by an online scheduling system is likely to be quickly read by the recipient, as most individuals now have easy access to both e-mail and text messages through their smartphone or Web-connected laptop. In fact, one study in the journal of *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing* showed that study

subjects checked their smartphones an average of 34 times per day. By sending these reminders, organizations and businesses increase the likelihood that their scheduler customers, clients, patients and students will make their appointment or reservation times.

- C. **Employee time spent more wisely.** Regardless if an employee is part-time or full-time, or is salaried or paid hourly, each minute of work is tied into the overall operating expenses of an organization or business. Most staff members responsible for scheduling and managing appointments and reservations have other responsibilities as well. Yet, a significant portion of a workday could be focused on just booking services.

Indeed.com lists the average annual salary of a receptionist employed in the United States at \$28,000, or approximately \$14.58 hourly. If he or she spends four hours per day focused entirely on appointments, the organization or business is spending almost \$300 per week just on a process that can be immediately automated for a small monthly fee.

- D. **Eliminates the need to hire a new employee.** Organizations and businesses that do not have the manpower to properly manage their appointments or reservations may need to bring on a part-time or full-time employee to handle this task, if done manually. This would add to the payroll the salary of a receptionist (as mentioned above) or an administrative assistant with an average annual salary of \$34,000, as reported by Indeed.com.

Online Scheduling Saves Money!

- 1) *It keeps a business or organization open 24 hours a day*
- 2) *It reduces “no-shows” and keeps appointment slots full.*
- 3) *Employee time spent more wisely.*
- 4) *Eliminates the need to hire a new employee.*

Conclusion

Advancements in Internet technology and software applications have made the dream of affordable and effective scheduling solutions a reality for countless numbers of organizations and businesses that depend on accurate and efficient booking processes, regardless of their size or scope. Online scheduling software has not only made it simple and convenient for individuals to book their own appointments and reservations from smartphones, laptop computers and tablets, it has also created a time- and money-saving option for businesses and organizations looking to automate, streamline and improve the way they manage this oftentimes tedious and burdensome task.

**To learn more about online scheduling software
and how it can improve your booking processes, visit
www.appointment-plus.com.**

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