Update for SOS users

Volume 02

What's new in SOS?

Emergency Recovery

Does anything like this ever happen at your facility? A line goes down hard. Or, a storm hits and tomorrow 25% of your workers are not going to make it in. Whatever the reason, somehow you have to reschedule the workforce on short term notice. Ideally, you'd like to recreate only the part of the schedule where the change is going to hit while leaving the rest of the schedule as is. Well now you can.

A new feature in SOS, "Recovery" gives you a global view of lines and departments and enables you to select elements that must be rescheduled while indicating others to remain unchanged. Designed for fighting fires, it works on any pending or current schedule for either today or tomorrow.

You can work on several levels. Select a shift and then select lines, departments or sub-departments. You can even drill down to the level of individual jobs. At any level, you can:
- "Clear" elements that are not going to be there in the new

schedule. (Such as the line that is down.)
- "Lock" elements to the existing schedule so they will stay as scheduled, and
- "Redo" any element that needs to be rescheduled.

Also, you can select classes of resources that you'll need to call on to fill the new schedule: volunteer or draft overtime, on call, reserves, temporaries. The selections are color coded making it easy to verify your work. When you are happy, commit the proposed changes, select the regenerate schedule button, and you're back in business. The real beauty is that you don't have to juggle everybody in the workforce when a reschedule in selected areas will work just fine.

Conditional Manning

Another new feature in SOS, it gives you a global view of jobs to help you eliminate redundant or unnecessary manning from your schedules. We developed it in response to an idea from one of our users.

Conditional Manning is organized around "masks" which, in SOS, are a predefined lists of jobs that represent a particular product either on a line or in a work area. Here's a simple example of Conditional Manning. You schedule a product to run on a line and the line requires a forklift in support. You schedule another line and it too requires a forklift. Then a third line is added again with a forklift. If the lines are

located in close proximity, two skilled fork operators can probably support all three lines. But what about further up the lines where any redundancy may not be so obvious? How about in the packaging or prep area?

A lot depends on the actual product mix and line configuration in your facility. However, this tool easily models every job on multiple lines. So if you have two or more lines with similar processes or even the same equipment, Conditional Manning can help reduce your overall labor cost by highlighting potential overstaffing that is otherwise difficult to detect. You can also add additional manning where called for.

Your masks are presented in a simple graphic format like a spread sheet where each column is a mask and each line, a job. As you scan down the columns, all the duplicate jobs line up beside one another. This makes it easy to see any redundancies. Next, you

indicate which jobs to eliminate. Similarly, you may find that given this particular combination of jobs and lines, you need to add someone, such as a packer.

Once you have fine-tuned the jobs, you save all the changes as a set or "super mask" which can be reused at any time. When you run a schedule that includes any of your super masks, you are given the choice of using Conditional Manning or not. If you confirm, the changes defined in the super mask show up in the schedule.

Defining a super mask calls for judgement, the kind that only comes from real management experience, on-the-floor. However, for advanced schedulers, Conditional Manning is a real power tool. The beauty is the way it captures and automates some of the imbedded knowledge your senior engineers and operations managers have developed over time.

What Is this Schedule Going to Cost?

In other words, given the manning along with any overtime, can we predict the total labor cost for a schedule? Since payroll is your biggest cost of operation, comparing the cost of one proposed schedule to the next

would help you stay on budget. Of course you have to assign your workforce so that they satisfy your production requirements but there is usually more than one way to do this.

SOS has a new report that answers this question.

It's an Audit report and it's titled "Schedule Cost - Planning Report." The report provides a summary showing the cost for each mask and a total for the schedule. Or it can include more detail, listing each job with its hourly rate, the scheduled hours, the cost for the job, the employee, along with subtotals for each Mask and the overall total.

To do this, you've got to have a pay rate associated with each worker in SOS. Realize that the report is intended for planning purposes and is not to be used for payroll. As a result, the pay rate in SOS does not have to be correct to the penny.

Interface to Time-&-Attendance .. Anything New?

Transferring a "finalized" schedule from SOS to your timekeeping system simplifies the task of calculating a payroll. SOS knows who worked on what job. The transfer eliminates redundant data entry and insures the accuracy of your payroll records. Since payroll usually looks to your timekeeping system to determine who gets paid and for how much work, going from SOS to timekeeping and from there to payroll is the correct trail for the data to follow. This feature has been available in SOS for some time. So, is there anything more you can do with this data transfer?

If employees are only allowed to clock in so many minutes ahead of the start of their shift and you have to set your time clocks to manage this, SOS can set the time clocks for you. If you have to do this every day, the time savings can be significant. "What used to take 45 minutes to an hour (for 250 to 300 employees) now is down to 20 seconds," reports one of our customers.

How this gets done is pretty simple. The schedule is exported to a file. And that file is than imported to your timekeeping system. This calls for careful attention to record formats and file locations, but none of it is rocket science, and the entire process can be automated.

"The primary benefit is a huge time saver as well as it eliminates (any) human error from putting in the wrong scheduled start and finish time."