

Flexible workforce model helps global retail brand navigate demand volatility



Client

A global athletic footwear and apparel brand with a large-scale distribution network needed a more agile approach to workforce management to support fluctuating demand and operational uncertainty.

Challenge

The client's distribution operations were under constant pressure from unpredictable demand patterns. Sharp swings in order volume, frequent absenteeism and ongoing supply chain disruptions made workforce planning difficult. Traditional staffing models struggled to keep pace. In some weeks, demand would spike dramatically, requiring rapid labor deployment. In others, needs would drop off just as quickly. This inconsistency created inefficiencies, increased costs and risked missed shipping targets. Compounding the issue, the client had limited visibility into how a gig-based workforce model could function within a distribution environment, where roles are more complex and less immediately transactional than app-based gig work.

Strategy

To address these challenges, the client partnered with the Staff Management | SMX team to design and implement a flexible workforce model tailored to distribution operations. The program launched as a pilot, allowing the client and Staff Management | SMX to test and refine the approach while building a more responsive labor strategy. The model focused on enabling rapid response to short-term volume spikes, absenteeism and special projects.

The Staff Management | SMX team developed a scalable pool of gig workers who could pick up shifts based on demand, while also helping the client reset expectations around scheduling. Unlike app-based gig work, distribution roles required more structure, leading to adjustments in shift length, notice periods and fulfillment expectations. Through ongoing collaboration, Staff Management | SMX continuously refined the program, improving forecasting alignment and fulfillment outcomes over time.

Results

The partnership delivered measurable improvements in workforce agility and performance.

Over 9000

workforce requests supported annually

85%

fill rate achieved in line with established KPI targets

Improved

fill rate performance year-over-year as the model matured

Successfully supported

peak season demand, helping the client meet critical shipping goals

In addition to performance gains, the client benefited from a more

flexible and resilient

workforce strategy, reducing the risks associated with demand volatility