

Oliver & Bonacini's appetite for success

Employees
**1,500 to
2,100 (season
dependent)**

Industry
Hospitality

Headquarters
**Toronto,
Ontario**

Solution
Dayforce

The Canadian restaurant and events company looked to Dayforce to better manage its staff, make smarter business decisions, and get time back to focus on the main course.

Oliver & Bonacini Bayview Village is Jeff and Betty's spot. You could call it their dining room away from home. They eat at the restaurant once a week, sometimes more. Jeff always orders his favorite: the turkey burger, and biscotti for dessert. Betty likes to change things up.

One day last winter, staff at the restaurant noticed Betty eating alone. When they asked about Jeff, Betty told them the news: he was in the hospital. She was spending most of her time there, too.

Staff immediately got together to see how they could help. They packed up a care package – a turkey burger, biscotti, and a few other treats – and the manager hopped into his car and made a personal delivery to the hospital.



“It made Jeff feel so much better to get his favorite food while he was in the hospital,” says Marlene Smith, the restaurant’s general manager. “It was just something small that we did that made a big difference to them.”

A recipe for an unforgettable experience

The love of food and people was baked into O&B’s DNA from day one, when Peter Oliver, a Toronto restaurateur, and Michael Bonacini, then the chef de cuisine at Toronto’s Windsor Arms Hotel, collaborated on their first restaurant, Jump.

Over its 25-year history, Oliver & Bonacini has grown to 19 restaurants and nine event spaces in four provinces, and counting. They have anywhere from 1,500 to 2,100 employees, depending on the season.

All O&B eateries are known for their culinary excellence. Whether you’re ordering the Pacific halibut at Canoe, the côte de boeuf at Auberge du Pommier, or the lamb assado at Leña, you can expect that same unparalleled flavor, the same Instagram-able presentation.

Growth demands a better system

“When I began, I had a heck of a time even finding out what people’s schedules were,” says Phil Wylie, VP People and Operations. “All the schedules were printed off in spreadsheets and tacked up on the wall. It was crazy that we were that big and I couldn’t get that simple basic information.”

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Every O&B location is different, with its own unique staffing needs. Some have busy summer patios that require a large casual workforce. Buzzing seasonal event spaces often have fluctuating staffing needs. Smaller, higher-end spots need highly-trained staff.

The one constant is that much of O&B's workforce is part-time, and many employees have busy lives, often juggling shifts with classes, auditions, or second jobs. Accommodating staff needs has always been a company priority. But as growth picked up, managers found themselves spending less time on the floor with staff and guests, and more time in the back office processing HR paperwork.

Tracy Tucker, a director with O&B, says she used to lie awake at night worrying about how she'd get it all done. "We were opening all these new restaurants, and we just needed to find a better way of doing things," she says.

The ingredients for success

Picture a busy restaurant on a Friday night. The controlled chaos of the kitchen. The smooth glide of servers across the dining room. Everybody is working together in an elegant dance that's choreographed almost down to the minute. When even one person is out of step, it throws the rest of the dancers out of sync. And that can be the difference between a great guest experience and a terrible one.

Thanks to Dayforce, managers and staff have the technology and real-time information they need to keep things moving smoothly.

Centralizing employee information, time and attendance, schedules, vacation tracking, and payroll and benefits has saved the company thousands of dollars in management time. Tucker estimates it saves each restaurant manager more than an hour a day. "It's a huge amount of time. Minutes count in a restaurant. We can make a lot happen in two minutes. So, to save anywhere from one to four hours a day for a management team is enormous."

Dayforce has helped the company to better manage their scheduling: when a restaurant is short a manager, it's a cinch to transfer someone from another location – a task that used to take hours before. Filling last-minute staff vacancies has become a breeze. The system has also allowed them to more easily set up and manage training shifts for new staff, as well as the onboarding process.

But the pièce de résistance has been the mobile app. Staff can easily check their schedules, input time-off requests, and trade shifts. Managers can pull up schedules quickly, approve requests with the tap of a finger, and make quick decisions to ensure the dance of the dining room stays on tempo.



“Nowhere in our values do we have, ‘be really great at administrative paperwork.’ Dayforce allows us to take away that burden from our employees and our managers. It allows them to focus on what they do best,” adds Wylie. “Dayforce has been a spectacular partner for us in allowing us to grow and scale and take on more and more, while not losing what made us so successful in the first place, which is that focus on the guest, focus on the food, and end-to-end, amazing, memorable experience.”

With better data comes better decisions

Dayforce is not only helping the O&B team manage its workforce, it's also equipping them with the data and insights they need to make smart decisions to support their expanding business.

“Without Dayforce, I'd probably be making a bunch of decisions based on my gut, rather than on the data, which is a dangerous place to be if you're in charge of HR.”

Phil Wylie, VP People and Operations

Having information centralized in Dayforce has helped Marlene Smith get more accurate costing reports and become more exact in her forecasting for the Bayview Village restaurant she manages. Tucker loves how easy it is to monitor and manage overtime costs. Wylie is more easily able to gather insights and report on different aspects of the workforce – information that helps him increase staff engagement and decrease turnover. And with several new locations opening in the coming months, it's helped him identify that perfect mix of staff that will make a new location a success.

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A true implementation partnership

As their business has grown and changed, O&B has enlisted Ceridian's Professional Services team to help them maximize the use of the system.

“I think the thing that I wasn’t expecting, when I signed the contract with Ceridian, was that I would get to know a bunch of the people that work there. And I have gotten to know both the sales people and support people, and they’ve all been super helpful and have taken a real interest in our business,” says Wylie. “So, when I explain some of the challenges that I’m having and the solutions that I’m looking for, they really take the time to think about how Dayforce can help us. They really care that we do a great job – that we’re successful.”



“Oliver & Bonacini is such a people-centric company,” says Tucker. “Dayforce gives us the ability to spend more time with people, whether that’s staff, or guests. That’s what Dayforce gives us: more time with people.”