

Client Success Story

First Watch Employs AI to Extend “You First” Culture and Improve Candidate Experience.



Industry: Restaurant

Employees: 9,000

Locations: 380 across 24 states

First Watch is a company that knows the value of being early and fresh. Whether it's staying true to their breakfast and lunch-only schedule, being an early leader in the farm-to-table movement, or delivering highly personalized service, “The Daytime Cafe” isn't afraid to be different and it's paying off. As one of the fastest-growing restaurant chains in the U.S., First Watch is building communities of local customers one newspaper and fresh cup of coffee at a time. With 150 new restaurants estimated to open within the next three years, rapid expansion means significant hiring in a highly competitive employment market.

Laura Sorenson, Chief People Officer, knew that attracting talent for the future growth would need to look different than the way First Watch previously recruited. With this in mind, the team at First Watch set out to deliver a more personalized experience to candidates. According to Sorenson, “To be competitive, we need to be thinking about what's new. We wanted to show our candidates that we care and make the process easier for them. We didn't know exactly what would come out of implementing Olivia, but we cannot believe the success we've seen. The results speak for themselves.”

Personalized Service That is “You First”

With a commitment to scaling their “You First” culture, First Watch focuses on serving others. “Our ‘You First’ culture is about servant leadership and that starts with our First Watch employees and translates into the way we serve our customers,” stated Julie Godfroy, Director of Special Projects. “We want to deliver that same feeling and service experience to our candidates.”

The Sarasota, Florida headquartered company is committed to scaling their culture of southern hospitality as they grow and sees technology as a way to help them support their hiring needs. “We previously tried a chatbot, but it failed,” explained Lou Sposato, Senior Director of Human Resources. “Instead, Olivia feels real and personal to candidates. Her persona is casual and professional with a sense of humor that reflects the First Watch brand and our culture.”

Recruiting as Easy as Texting “Bacon”

Rethinking the candidate experience started with considering personal touchpoints, the best way to market to each role, and the appropriate process.

“We cannot believe the success we've seen. The results speak for themselves.”

Laura Sorenson
Chief People Officer
First Watch Restaurants

Results

96%

Interview Acceptance Rate

91%

Scheduled in the Same Day

103%

Staffed for Managers



According to Sposato, “The minute I saw Olivia, I was hooked. She is everything that hourly job seekers are looking for— immediate engagement and they can walk away with an interview.” Today, candidates can submit their interest for jobs through a conversation with Olivia on the First Watch career site or through SMS. For candidates on mobile devices, applying for jobs and being scheduled for an interview is as easy as texting “Bacon.”

Olivia is Bringing Qualified Talent in the Door

Prior to Olivia, First Watch directed candidates to complete the online application through their applicant tracking system (ATS). Managers would then login to the ATS to screen and then schedule in-person interviews by phone. The goal was to contact applicants within 24 hours, but regularly that didn't happen and First Watch missed out on candidates. Now, restaurant managers simply set their interview availability based on their hiring needs and Olivia does the rest. Olivia screens and auto-schedules qualified candidates, and helps candidates through the process who might not otherwise finish applying. Today, 99% of First Watch candidates who provide their contact info to Olivia complete the screening conversation, and 96% of candidates accept their interview invitation. First Watch talent walks in the door for their pre-scheduled interviews and managers can hire on the spot.

“Olivia has a higher conversion rate than any other channel we use— both higher quality and likelihood to hire.”

Lou Sposato

Sr. Director of Human Resources
First Watch Restaurants

Staffed for the Future

“We're filling positions much faster,” stated Godfroy. “Olivia has been critical for our new store openings, particularly in difficult locations. She shines during our hiring week events with multiple interviewers.” As a result, First Watch is 103% staffed for current management hiring needs. Additionally, all existing and new restaurants are 99% staffed for the next 90 days, and 96% staffed for management positions over the next 6 months. According to Sposato, “We have continued plans for phenomenal growth of new restaurants and hiring. Olivia is always leading the way.”

Ready to meet Olivia?

Text **FWstory** to **25000** or visit us at paradox.ai.



PARADOX
OLIVIA