



CASE STUDY

How a Maryland McDonald's Franchisee Reduced Missed Shifts, Improved Reliability, and Generated Immediate ROI in 4 Weeks with Escalate

*A Data-Driven Look at What Happens
When Frontline Workers Get Real-Life Support*

Escalate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2025, HNF McDonald's, a seven-restaurant franchise organization in Maryland, launched the white-labeled Escalate Support App to address one of the most persistent operational challenges in quick-service restaurants: missed shifts driven by real-life barriers.

Within just four weeks, the pilot delivered measurable operational and financial impact:

- **120 employees actively engaged** (doubling in two weeks)
- **64 employee surveys completed**, revealing consistent root causes of absenteeism
- **16 missed shifts prevented** on average per restaurant
- **\$5,000–\$8,000+ in avoided labor inefficiency** per location
- A clear path to **\$35,000–\$56,000+ in avoided costs for the franchisee per month**

This case study highlights how proactive, mobile-first employee support can improve shift reliability, reduce manager burden, and deliver fast ROI—without adding operational complexity.

THE SYSTEMWIDE CHALLENGE



Across McDonald's restaurants nationwide, operators face increasing pressure from:

- Transportation breakdowns
- Food insecurity and rising living costs
- Financial emergencies
- Childcare gaps, especially nights and weekends
- Mental health strain
- Managers spending hours each week managing employee crises



These challenges show up operationally as: **call-outs, no-shows, understaffed shifts, burnout, and turnover.** Traditional benefits and training programs do not address these *real-time, real-life barriers*—leaving restaurants vulnerable to daily disruptions.

THE SOLUTION

Escalate

A new category of frontline support

Escalate provides 24/7, mobile-first support designed specifically for hourly frontline workers.

Employees can instantly access from their smartphone:

- Emergency and backup transportation
- Food support and community resource referrals
- Financial guidance and crisis navigation
- Health and wellness support
- Childcare support
- Live human coaching plus AI-driven assistance
- English and Spanish mobile access



Life

Support services that help take care of the life stuff that can get in the way of an employee shining.



Work

Support services that empower your employees to do their best work.



Advancement

Support services that unlock the potential of your team with opportunities to level up.

For managers, Escalate acts as a reliability safety net, helping employees resolve issues quickly—before a missed shift occurs.

THE RESULTS



4-Week Pilot Results:
Clear Signals of ROI



1. Strong Employee Adoption

- 120 employees logged on across seven restaurants
- Engagement doubled in the last two weeks of the pilot
- Early adoption was 5x higher than comparable pilots

5x

Higher Early Adoption

2. Survey Data Identified Root Causes of Missed Shifts and/or Poor Performance

Employee responses were highly consistent.
Top barriers to showing up for work:

- Transportation challenges
- Food insecurity
- Financial emergencies
- Health and wellness needs

These are precisely the issues that drive call-outs, no-shows and poor performance across the QSR industry.

64 Surveys Completed



3. Missed Shifts Prevented - With Clear Financial Impact

In the first month:

- 16 missed shifts were prevented on average per restaurant
- Employees facing emergencies received real-time support and still reported to work

Financial ROI Breakdown (Per Restaurant):

- Average cost to prevent a missed shift using Escalate: ~\$30
- Estimated cost of a missed shift for McDonald's: \$350–\$500
- Net savings per prevented shift: \$320–\$470

Total avoided cost (16 shifts):

- \$5,000–\$8,000+
- in reduced labor inefficiency, service disruption, and customer impact

16

Missed Shifts
Prevented



4. Scalable ROI Across All 7 Restaurants

The impact total across the franchise group, for all seven restaurants:

- 16 prevented shifts x 7 restaurants = 112 shifts
- \$35,000–\$56,000+ in avoided costs in just four weeks

This demonstrates the scalability of Escalate's ROI.

\$35,000-65,000+

In Avoided Costs In Just 4 Weeks

5. Supporting Frontline Managers by Taking Pressure Off Their Plates

A critical and often overlooked outcome of the Escalate pilot was its impact on frontline managers.

Rather than managers spending time troubleshooting transportation issues, food emergencies, or personal crises during already understaffed shifts, Escalate served as an always-on support layer employees could access directly.

Managers reported that Escalate:

1. Reduced last-minute calls and texts related to personal emergencies
2. Minimized time spent scrambling to cover shifts
3. Provided confidence that employees had a trusted place to turn
4. Allowed managers to focus on operations, coaching, and customer experience

Key Takeaway:

Escalate doesn't add work for managers—it removes it. By resolving real-life issues before they become operational problems, Escalate acts as a pressure valve for frontline leadership and improves overall team stability.

6. Seasonal Support Drove Trust & Engagement

To support employees during a high-stress season:

- Employees received \$25 Visa grocery gift cards for Thanksgiving
- Weekly \$50 Amazon gift card drawings boosted early engagement
- Holiday support for December is underway

These efforts accelerated adoption while easing financial pressure during peak demand periods.

100%

Smiles

OPERATOR PERSPECTIVE



“At HNF Management, Inc., we are more than just a workplace—we’re a family. We do whatever it takes to make sure our team feels truly valued and supported. Adding Escalate to the benefits we provide our employees was a no-brainer.”

Imani Ford

Owner/Operator, HNF McDonald’s

WHY MCDONALD'S OPERATORS ARE PAYING ATTENTION

Escalate helps restaurants:

- Reduce call-outs and no-shows
- Improve shift reliability
- Lighten manager workload
- Strengthen employee trust and well-being
- Complement Archways and existing benefits
- Launch quickly with minimal operational burden

Escalate does not replace education or training programs -
it ensures employees can actually show up and benefit from them.

CONCLUSION

The first four weeks of the HNF McDonald's–Escalate partnership reveal a clear pattern:

- Employees use the app
- Barriers are predictable and solvable
- Prevented crises lead directly to better staffing
- Managers value having backup
- Restaurants stay open, staffed, and stable

**Escalate helps employees show up ready to work -
and helps McDonald's restaurants protect revenue,
service quality, and brand reputation.**

**Please contact us to learn
how we can help your business.**

Escalate

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