

Advantage Solutions Builds an Integrated Frontline Advantage



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A Hidden Frontline Giant at the Heart of Retail

Advantage Solutions Inc. is a Fortune 1000 company that connects more than 4,000 consumer brands with retailers across North America through outsourced sales, marketing, and retail execution services. Founded in 1987 and headquartered in Clayton, Missouri, the company has roughly 70,000 employees, nearly 90% of whom are frontline, part-time workers who support merchandising, product sampling, and in-store promotions in over 85,000 locations.

Advantage refers to these workers as “teammates.” They are often seen standing behind branded carts or in store aisles wearing retailer badges, but they are actually hired, developed, scheduled, and supported by Advantage. In addition to staffing, Advantage delivers data- and technology-enabled services—including digital commerce, retail media, and omnichannel marketing—designed to help clients maximize ROI and drive sales more efficiently.

“*Our frontline teammates are our brand, and they are the ones who show up and perform the tough tasks to exceed customer expectations.*”

Dave Peacock, CEO, Advantage Solutions

High-Volume Hiring, Highly Variable Experiences

Advantage provides daily frontline coverage across more than 85,000 retail locations, operating as an extension of its clients’ in-store teams. However, its business model introduces a unique complexity: the company not only supplies talent to major retailers but also competes with them for the same local labor pool, hiring nearly 50,000 frontline workers annually.

This volume of hiring creates constant pressure to move quickly, hire high-caliber talent, and maintain execution standards—while still offering a compelling frontline value proposition and a differentiated candidate experience.

Summary

Challenge

- Competing with large retailers for a shared talent pool while hiring ~50,000 workers annually.
- Fluctuating customer and event volumes that led to inconsistent utilization and administrative complexity.
- Balancing retention, utilization, cost-to-serve, safety, and operational excellence without an end-to-end frontline view.

Solution

- Implemented Appcast for targeted sourcing and Paradox (Alix) to automate screening and prehire onboarding with a conversational AI assistant.
- Appointed a chief workforce officer—a role rarely found in most organizations—to create stewardship and accountability for the end-to-end frontline lifecycle.
- Shifted to geocentric staffing—assigning workers across locations within a defined area—via the Boost ACX scheduling platform.

Results

- Hired ~54,000 frontline teammates in 2025, increasing recruiter productivity by 20%, reducing time-to-hire by three days, and achieving a 74% offer-to-hire conversion rate.
- Increased Boost ACX adoption from 38% to 94%, enabling faster AI-driven staffing for nearly 85% of events and cross-location talent sharing.
- Improved frontline utilization and reduced early attrition, contributing to an estimated 33% reduction in third-party labor spend.

“Our frontline teams are the heart and soul of what we do. If they aren’t in stores every day serving clients and customers, we don’t have a business. So for our talent acquisition teams, hiring is about far more than filling roles fast—it’s about setting them up for a good experience from the moment they apply,” said Erin Eastham, VP of Frontline Talent Delivery at Advantage.

Historically, frontline teammates were hired to support specific retail partnerships, with each store or brand often maintaining its own onboarding, training, and deployment processes. As a result, delivering a consistent posthire experience was challenging.

At the same time, fluctuating customer and event volumes across stores led to uneven utilization and a significant administrative burden in managing staffing. While underutilization increased labor costs, it also limited earning potential for hourly teammates.

Frontline workers—particularly those in product demo and sampling roles—have increasingly asked for additional hours and more predictable, flexible schedules, which have been hard to deliver within a store-centric model. These challenges culminated in preventable churn, higher cost-to-serve, and inconsistent execution.

Building an Integrated Frontline Operating System

Advantage recognized the need to move beyond addressing isolated workforce issues and instead build an integrated frontline operating system to manage the end-to-end employee experience. This required clear ownership and investment in standardizing how teammates are hired, onboarded, scheduled, and supported, while also optimizing utilization and cost-to-serve and delivering a more consistent experience across retailers and brands.

AI-Powered, Human-Centered Hiring

Advantage set the pace for a broader transformation of the frontline experience by reimagining the hiring journey. In 2022, the company shifted from recruiter-driven processes to an agentic AI ecosystem—one in which AI agents autonomously move candidates through the funnel with minimal recruiter intervention—built on a standalone Paradox applicant tracking system (ATS), establishing itself as a leader in automated frontline talent acquisition.

Through Appcast, Advantage executes programmatic recruitment marketing that dynamically places and optimizes job ads across channels. This enables precise targeting by geography and talent segment, improving candidate quality while keeping marketing budgets flat—even during periods of high hiring demand.

Once candidates enter the funnel, Alix—a conversational AI recruiting agent powered by Paradox—keeps them moving 24/7, accelerating hiring timelines and reducing recruiter workload. Roughly 34% of candidates engage outside traditional business hours; in 2025 alone, Alix responded to over three million applicant queries in real time.

Compliance processes—including background checks, I-9 verification, tax documentation, payroll elections, and other prehire requirements—are integrated into the same workflow. System-enforced validations reduce manual errors and prevent delays in critical onboarding steps. Recruiters are intentionally focused on higher-impact activities such as conducting interviews, assessing candidate fit, and building relationships with strong candidates—regardless of immediate openings.

At the same time, a dedicated prehire onboarding team ensures candidates experience a meaningful human connection in an AI-enabled journey. By providing targeted, high-touch support at key moments, the team reduces post-offer attrition and improves offer-to-hire conversion.

By focusing the human touch where it matters most, Advantage also maintains a digital talent hub of prescreened candidates, alumni, and seasonal workers—creating a warm, readily deployable talent pool that can be quickly activated as new openings surface.

Elevating the Frontline Workforce to the C-Suite

Frontline teams at Advantage previously reported to commercial leaders accountable for driving revenue through retailer and brand partnerships. As a result, workforce decisions were often shaped by commercial priorities rather than a workforce-first perspective.

“The board realized that as long as our frontline teammates reported into commercial leaders, we would always default to a retailers- and brands-led model, rather than a workforce-led model,” said Saint Julian Snider, SVP of Workforce Operations at Advantage. “We needed to put an executive at the table whose sole mandate is our frontline teammates, with the same level of focus, authority, and strategic weight as any other part of the business,” Snider explained.

In 2025, Advantage created a chief workforce officer (CWO) role—still rare in most organizations—to serve as the steward of an integrated frontline operating system. The role ensures that decisions about technology, processes, and governance are made with frontline teammates at the center.

This shift proved instrumental in creating clear prioritization and accountability for transforming the frontline experience and making those initiatives stick.

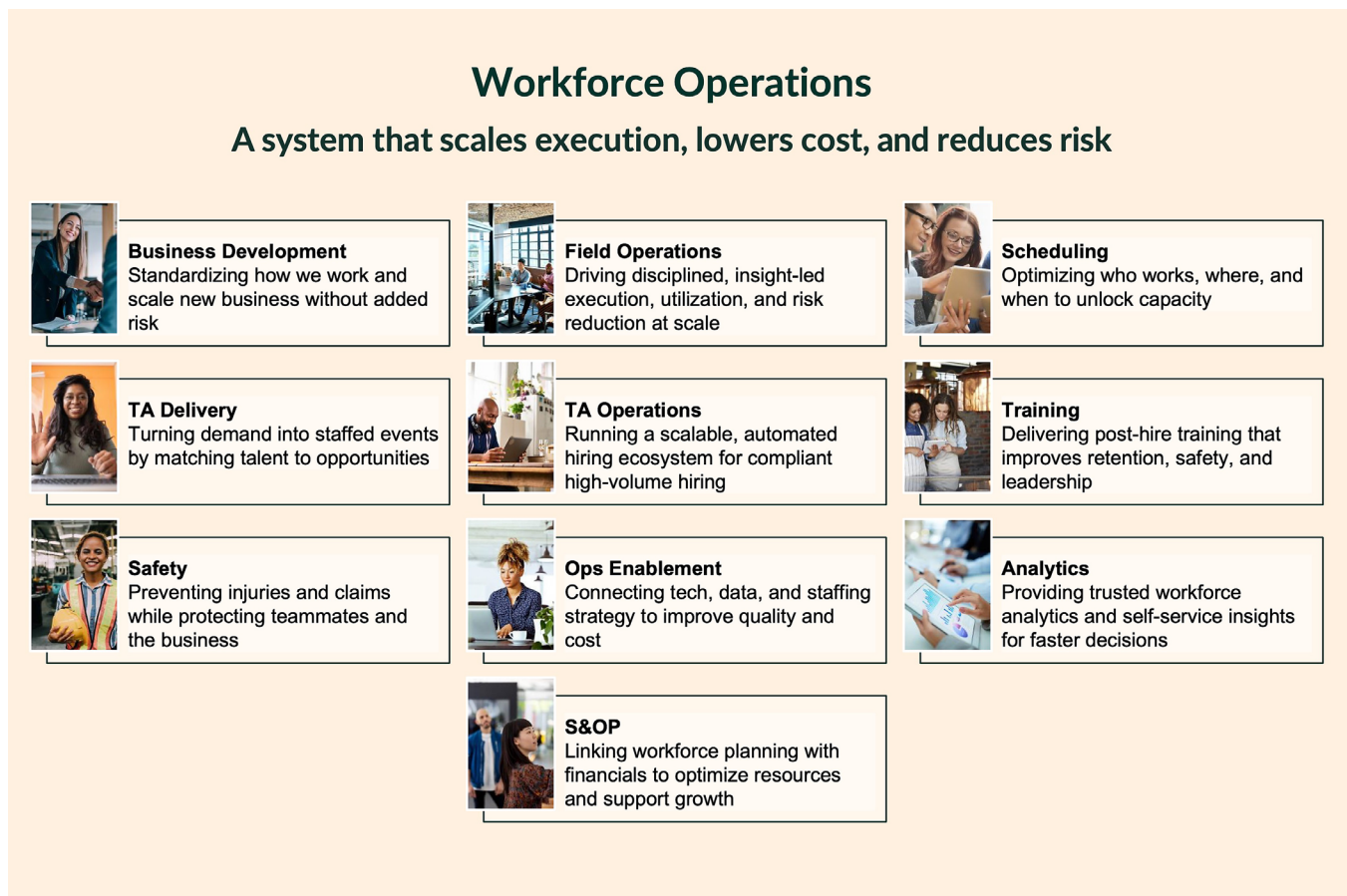
Clarifying Workstreams and Accountability

Under the CWO, Advantage mapped the entire frontline lifecycle into clearly defined workstreams within a single function called Workforce Operations (see Figure 1).

“Workforce Operations at Advantage Solutions oversees the entire frontline journey—from workforce planning and talent acquisition through onboarding, training, deployment, safety, communications, field operations, and continuous improvement—ensuring that every touchpoint in the frontline talent lifecycle is designed as part of one integrated system, rather than a series of disconnected programs,” said Katy Shaddock, VP of Talent Acquisition Operations at Advantage.

Each workstream is supported by a dedicated analytics engine that monitors incidents, regulatory compliance, and performance metrics—continuously feeding insights into process improvement. Using a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed) framework, Advantage established clear ownership of analysis, defined decision-making bodies to

FIGURE 1: Advantage Solutions’ Frontline Operating System



Source: Advantage Solutions, 2026

act on insights and allocate resources, and enabled transparent handoffs across talent acquisition, training, enablement, field operations, and compliance.

This integrated view gives leaders precise visibility into where candidate drop-offs or delays occur—allowing them to focus improvements on the most critical failure points.

Rearchitecting the Posthire Experience

To ensure employees feel supported, prepared, and well-equipped for their first shift, the training and enablement workstreams within Workforce Operations thoughtfully rebuilt its posthire frontline teammate experience. “When someone joins us, our responsibility is to get them from hire to first shift feeling confident and safe,” said Karen Hunstiger, Senior Director of Training at Advantage.

Once hired, every frontline teammate participates in a live, virtual orientation led by the training team. This session introduces Advantage’s culture, pay, and scheduling expectations, safety basics, and what to expect when entering a store for the first time—ensuring teammates don’t walk into a large warehouse or superstore feeling “lost and alone,” Hunstiger added.

Mandatory training—including new-hire safety, state food safety, and regulatory requirements—is delivered through the learning management system (LMS), currently via Saba/Pathways, with a planned transition to Workday Learning. Retailer- and role-specific training is provided through targeted job aids that help teammates answer the question: “What’s different in this retailer?”—clarifying expectations around uniforms, equipment, and store-specific protocols.

The training team is also building a foundational, retailer-agnostic curriculum for field supervisors. These leaders spend the majority of their time in the field—not caught in the weeds of administrative work, but investing their time in the ongoing development of frontline teammates. They shadow new hires, provide coaching, and conduct 30-day check-ins to identify issues early, support redeployment when needed, and turn the critical first month on the job into the foundation of a lasting frontline career.

From Store-Centric to Geocentric Staffing

To address underutilization and improve earnings potential among frontline teammates, Advantage piloted a significant shift in its staffing approach within the Advantage Customer Experience (ACX) function, which supports events such as sampling and demos. The company moved from a model where teammates were tied to a single store or retailer to a geography-based talent-sharing model. Teammates are now hired into a defined geographic pocket (e.g., a 10-mile radius) and can work across multiple retailers within that area.

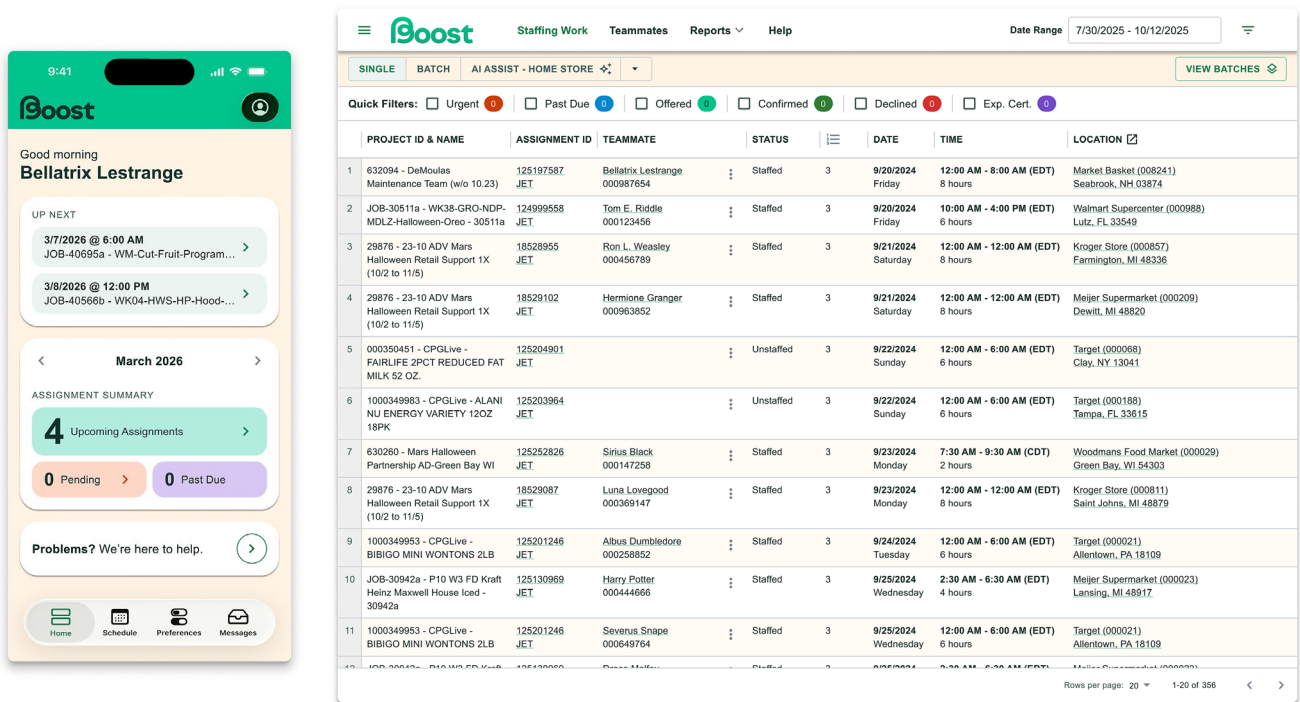
“The shift to geocentric staffing was driven by what our teammates told us: ‘I want more hours, but my store only has two events a week.’ By hiring into a geographic pocket instead of a single retailer, we can offer more hours, more variety, and better utilization of the workforce we already have,” said Katie McCants, VP of Operations and Work Force Management at Advantage.

Advantage’s proprietary scheduling platform, Boost ACX, operationalizes this model by creating unique profiles for each teammate and algorithmically matching them to available work based on preferences such as availability, retailer selection, and maximum driving distance. Boost ACX automates staffing for roughly 85% to 90% of roles, with the remaining 10% to 15% handled as exceptions by staffing specialists and field leaders (see Figure 2 on the next page).

This geocentric, AI-assisted model represents a significant shift in the frontline teammate experience and value proposition. Teammates gain access to more predictable yet flexible schedules, along with greater autonomy to pick up additional hours and increase earnings.

For Advantage, the model creates operational agility, stabilizes execution, and reduces dependence on third-party labor—even during seasonal peaks or periods of fluctuating demand.

FIGURE 2: The ACX Boost Platform for Geocentric Staffing



Source: Advantage Solutions, 2026

A Tangible Frontline Advantage

Advantage’s integrated frontline operating system is already translating into measurable gains in hiring, retention, utilization, and cost. In 2025, the company hired roughly 54,000 frontline teammates while boosting recruiter productivity by 20%, reducing time-to-hire by roughly 3 days, and achieving a 74% offer-to-hire conversion rate.

On the deployment side, the shift from a store-centric to a geocentric staffing model has fundamentally changed how work is assigned and how hours are distributed. Reflecting strong adoption and trust in the new model, 94% of teammates now use Boost to indicate preferences and select shifts, up from 38% prior to the change. Nearly 85% of ACX events are staffed via AI, enabling faster, more accurate matching of teammates to opportunities across multiple retailers within a geographic pocket.

Initial indicators point to higher frontline utilization and growing early tenure, as teammates gain access to more hours and more predictable yet flexible schedules.

For Advantage, these improvements translate into stronger execution for clients and an estimated 33% reduction in third-party labor spend over time, alongside a 9% year-over-year decrease in safety claims driven by more consistent, targeted training and analytics.

Together, these outcomes demonstrate how a workforce-led model—supported by C-suite advocacy, clear accountability, and a transformed teammate experience—can drive enduring frontline advantage and business resilience.

Next Steps: Scaling the Frontline Advantage

Advantage views its frontline operating system as a living platform—continuously evolving to guide future priorities and investments. Over the next few years, the company plans to complete its Workday implementation and more tightly integrate learning, HR, and scheduling data, enabling richer end-to-end visibility into teammate journeys and facilitating more sophisticated internal mobility.

At the same time, Advantage is continuing to evolve its Boost ACX scheduling system to support selective, opt-in shifts—capturing the best of gig-style flexibility while preserving the continuity and predictability that clients and many teammates rely on. With clear workstreams and accountability in place, the company is poised to continue innovating, piloting new staffing models, recognition programs, and leadership approaches—and scaling what measurably improves both the frontline experience and business results.

Lessons Learned

- **Give frontline priorities a dedicated seat at the table.** Establishing a CWO position with end-to-end accountability for the frontline lifecycle accelerates decision-making, investment, and follow-through.
- **Adopt a holistic approach—not a patchwork mindset.** Addressing workforce challenges in isolation reinforces fragmentation; an integrated talent strategy drives more durable impact.
- **Use AI to transform processes, not replace people.** Preserve human capacity for high-value activities like coaching, problem-solving, and relationship-building, while using AI to automate manual and repetitive tasks.
- **Standardize where possible; localize where necessary.** A consistent in-house onboarding experience—supplemented by retailer-specific job aids—enables scalability while respecting local nuances.
- **Let the frontline inform the design.** The geocentric staffing model emerged directly from teammate feedback on the need for more hours—demonstrating that listening to the workforce can unlock measurable value for both employees and the business.

About the Author



Nehal Nangia

Nehal is senior director of research at The Josh Bersin Company, where she leads empirical research on all talent management topics, with a deep focus on frontline workforce strategies. She brings nearly 20 years of experience in human capital research, advisory services, and consulting in talent management, L&D, leadership, performance management, employment value proposition, and inclusion. She previously led the global advisory practice at Deloitte, where she provided consultative advice to global HR and talent leaders on advancing key talent priorities. Nehal has also led deployments of Gartner's benchmarking and diagnostic products for the EMEA, APAC, and ANZ regions. She has a master's degree in psychology, an advanced specialization in AI, and the Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR®) certification. Nehal lives in India.

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