



## **Training - a Matter of Survival**

*Why should I train my staff – they are only going to leave?*

High staff turnover has long been a dilemma for foodservice operators and it's no wonder. With generally low entry level wages, limited benefits and challenging hours of operation; at first glance working in the industry is not an appealing proposition. And for those who do take-up the challenge, they are often faced with having to work two jobs simply to cover their living costs. As a result they are constantly looking for the opportunity to increase their income and decrease their working hours; to appreciate a more balanced lifestyle.

*What if you don't train your employees and they stay?*

Might the real cost be low productivity, damage to their brand reputation, poor customer retention and lower than expected profit? During the coming years there is a real need for several hundred thousand new foodservice workers across Canada and there are fewer skilled workers to choose from. Operators are constantly looking for ways to attract and retain the right people. Employers are beginning to view training as an absolute need. According to Statistics Canada "investment in human resources, that is, in education and skills training, is three times as important to economic growth as is investment in physical capital, such as machinery and equipment."

*How much will I get back for every dollar invested in training?*

It's interesting to note the amount of money operators spend on advertising and promoting their business to attract *new* customers, yet they tend to not fully recognize the potential value of the customers they already have. Customer satisfaction stands out as the number one driver for increasing sales, productivity and profits. Savvy operators recognize this and are now spending a portion of their advertising and promotion dollars on staff training. *Why...* too increase the level of *existing* customer satisfaction and to retain staff. And in doing so they also appreciate the value-added benefit word of mouth advertising by customers and staff can provide, and it's at no additional cost.

*The consumers #1 concern!*

According to the Consumer Council of Canada, food safety is ranked as the customer's #1 concern when consuming food outside of the home. Hardly a day goes by without media attention to foodborne concerns. Customer awareness and expectations are at an all time high. The customer's observation of your staff practices creates a lasting impression and too often becomes the cause of lost business and reputation. Unfortunately by the time you realize what's happening, it's either too late or you face an almost impossible challenge to regain the customer's confidence and that of others they may have spoken too. You can avoid this by having staff trained to apply best practices in the workplace. And I don't mean simply having them take a food safety certification course. After all it's not what they know, it's what they do. And what they do or don't do, as may be the case, is what determines the customer's level of satisfaction.

So.... *how much will I get back for every dollar spent on training?*

That's entirely up to you! Those same savvy operators mentioned above might provide the training at their cost, share the cost with employees or refund the employee's portion over time as a retention incentive and reward for loyalty. What we do know is by increasing customer satisfaction, reducing staff turnover, implementing best practices and building on your good name and reputation - sustaining long-term profitability can be achieved.

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