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## Systemizing your food service training program

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**A**dmit it: We don't do it enough. Train that is. The fact of the matter is that it is always hanging over our heads and always on the "to do" list. If you have the luxury of a training coordinator, then read no more. If you are like most of us and that went away 15 years ago, read on.

The key to an effective training program is like most things in food service operations: Have a system. Setting up that system is a lot of front-end work, but if you do commit and set up a system, it will pay dividends many times over. It will reduce turnover, decrease errors, reduce or eliminate accidents, and lead to better employee commitment.

An effective training system starts with how you train the new hire. Do you have an orientation training checklist? Does that checklist get implemented with every new hire? Is it staged so that it is reviewed with a responsible manager/supervisor regularly during the first 90 days? Remember, it is not about the check-offs, it is about the competency and retention of the information. And not all new hires learn the same way. Use a variety of methods for training, including demonstration, videos, PowerPoint presentations, puzzles and handouts. Have the information reviewed with the new hire on a one-on-one basis with feedback and validation and in some cases, testing. Have both the new hire and the manager/supervisor "sign-off" on the training and place in the employee training file.

Food and environmental safety is the first place to start. After all, before we serve any food, we want it to be safe. Employee safety is also a high priority as we want to protect our workgroups from getting injured on the job, costing us money and replacing that person when injured.

New hires sometimes get more focus on training than our veterans. But that really is not right. Training needs to be for

everyone and everyone should have the opportunity to gain more in-depth skills, learn new things, and reinforce what is known but sometimes ignored or forgotten.

Develop a 12-month training calendar. Decide on a training topic for each month at minimum. Post the calendar on the bulletin board with attendance. An Excel spreadsheet works great and can be easily updated by any manager/supervisor if shared on a groups file. Training topics can be reviewed in all

employee meetings, area meetings, and one-on-one with supervisors/managers or sometimes with the right media by the employee in solo. PowerPoint presentations that are developed by managers/supervisors are effective, as they can incorporate digital pictures, movies, graphs/charts and sound. Challenge your managers/supervisors to learn PowerPoint and assign them to develop training topics. Reward those who do a particularly good job with a gift certificate or departmental recognition.

If you have a department newsletter, highlight the training topics for upcoming months. It is always a little fun to review what has been learned with quizzes, "did you know?" puzzles or other fun methods of review.

Training should not be limited to just work-related topics. Life skills such as budgeting, safety in the home, financial planning, etc., are appreciated and show our commitment to caring for the whole being, not just the work being. Incorporate this type of training into your curriculum.

And finally, review the effectiveness of your plan and revise as necessary. It is a system, but all systems need periodic review. As with a menu change, it is always easier to revise than to "start over from scratch."

An effective training program will enhance employee morale and gain commitment to your organization. The dividends will be paid many times over in future periods.

