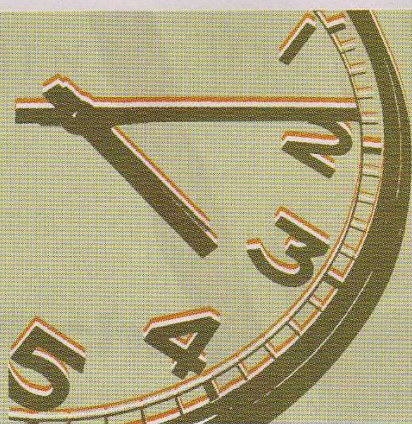




SLIGHTS



THE TEN-MINUTE MANAGER'S GUIDE TO ... **ON-BOARDING NEW EMPLOYEES**

TRAINING AND INCENTIVES

At Chipotle Mexican Grill, employees enjoy ongoing training opportunities as they move up through the ranks. "We've created a ladder, which provides a series of small and attainable steps to go from crew member to manager," says Chris Arnold, spokesman for the Denver-based chain. Those who are promoted also must train their replacements.

Chipotle used to hire managers from outside the company and put them through a six-week training program. Eventually, the chain decided that it "made more sense to bring individuals along from within," Arnold says. "Internal managers had better-performing stores

and lower turnover among crew members."

Chipotle also provides financial incentives for those who rise to the top. These elite managers enter the Restaurateur Program, through which they receive a salary and bonus based on performance. Additionally, they receive an amount equivalent to 10% of the sales beyond their store's target—if the goal is \$1.7 million and the store reaches \$2 million in sales, the participating manager will see an extra \$30,000. Bonuses are offered, too, for developing crew members into managers.

What does this have to do with on-boarding? Everything, says Arnold. "In an industry characterized by high turnover, we work hard to make people at all levels know there are meaningful opportunities," he says, adding that all newcomers learn early on about the paths they can take at Chipotle.

TECHNO TOOLS

At Atlanta-based Wing Zone, traditional training is augmented by technology. "We've embraced online training, which I think is the future for the QSR and fast-food industry," says CEO and co-founder Matt Friedman. His



Wing Zone

protocol "utilizes technology and the Internet to make training modern, quick, consistent and effective."

After viewing a 15-minute orientation video that offers a primer on Wing Zone's history and culture, new hires complete interactive training sessions. These sessions employ multiple formats, including question-and-answer segments and quizzes that cap off each chapter.

Friedman admits that the approach isn't the "be-all, end-all of training," but for new employees, it provides a valuable introduction to the brand and preps them for the hands-on training that will follow.

The online instruction has even served to quickly weed out uncommitted new hires. "We've had employees come in, watch the videos and then decide 'thanks, but this isn't for me,'" says Friedman. "This is a good thing. It's better to know early, rather than two weeks in."



Chipotle Mexican Grill

NEW EMPLOYEES WHO MAKE IT past the first few weeks of a job are much more likely to settle in for the long-term. As foodservice strives to improve retention rates for all hires, on-boarding programs—both formal and informal—have become integral to the training process. Dean McSherry, an Addison,

Texas-based restaurant consultant, suggests a multi-pronged strategy that covers much more than basic job training. Introducing new employees to key people, providing them with the right tools and integrating them into the company culture quickly will help ensure that they enjoy their work and succeed.

By Cheryl Sternman Rule, Special to R&I



ZERO-SUM GAME

New hourly employees at Cracker Barrel's 579 units earn stars for their aprons as they complete the company's training program. Before the stars were awarded, says spokeswoman Julie Davis, newcomers started the Personal Achievement and Responsibility program—called PAR—at PAR Level Zero. In a move to prevent employees from feeling like "zeroes," the terminology was changed. "We've started calling them Rising Stars," Davis says. Because on-boarding involves not only training but also morale-building, such linguistic distinctions can be meaningful.

The Lebanon, Tenn.-based company, which employs roughly 70,000 employees in 41 states, also initiated a buddy program. New hires are matched one-on-one with a manager, but not one who is responsible for their performance reviews. For the first 60 days, these buddies check in with trainees on a regular basis to assess their progress and respond to questions or concerns. "The idea is to create a custom on-boarding experience for each employee based on what they need," Davis says. "When employees feel like they know their jobs, they're going to feel good about their company."

ATTENTION FOR EVERY BODY

At Cal Dining at the University of California, Berkeley, new hires work with an ergonomist. "[Some of] our people will be with us for 10 to 30 years," says Assistant Dining Director Mike Laux. "The ergonomist helps them identify tools to open containers, provides fatigue mats and shows them how to mop in a way that won't injure their backs over time."

New employees also receive a preliminary health screening that helps identify any areas of

injury risk. The university's recreation sports center even brings in weights and works with staff on lifting and stretching exercises, because crew members will be performing stressful repetitive motions for hours each day. This can help pre-empt some injuries, such as carpal-tunnel syndrome.

"Our goal with on-boarding," Laux says, "is to make new employees aware of these programs. This is what we're about; this is what we do; this is what we value."



WELL-BRANDED

Casual-dining restaurants build success in part by leveraging the image of their brand and what it means to guests. Leawood, Kan.-based Houlihan's emphasizes this concept at all stages of its on-boarding process to ensure that new team members understand branding's role in guest interaction. Says Dave Brown, Houlihan's vice president of operations, "We're selling our brand, and we're looking for our employees to sell the brand."

To that end, Houlihan's on-boarding program is less paper-driven than others. "We teach people about our music, our culture, our scratch kitchens and the way things should be done," Brown says.

To ensure that the Houlihan's brand stays top of mind for all employees, managers meet annually for mini "vacations." Besides getting refresher courses in the brand's positioning and message, they receive topical training and learn about industry trends. They also spend time with the company CEO—an opportunity Brown describes as "pretty unique" for unit-level managers.

Houlihan's philosophy is straightforward, Brown says: Treat managers well, and they will be happy. Ultimately, happy managers create happy employees, and happy employees, in turn, create satisfied customers. **R&I**

Contact writer at riedit@reedbusiness.com