



# The Revolving Door

## Stemming Employee Turnover in the Current Restaurant Labor Market

By Howard Riell

**W**hen COVID-19 had just begun to sweep across the country in February 2020, restaurants employed more than 15 million people. A lot of people in the restaurant business lost their jobs, and those who didn't, are wondering if it is a safe and secure career path. If your business managed to weather the pandemic, you still need staff. As you well know, the business has changed.

### For Love and Money

The pandemic "has created chaos for foodservice businesses, as many employees are fearful of workplace transmission as well as customer interaction," says Arlene Spiegel, a New York City-based restaurant consultant.

"They are concerned if the workplace is health-compliant with safety, sanitation and personal protection supplies." Employees are also being asked to perform tasks outside the scope of their original duties, Spiegel adds, and simply may not want to. These include adding sanitation responsibilities; packing and delivering food for increased take-out demands; and working off-hours to maintain proper distances. Says Spiegel, "Employers have to go beyond normal communications to assure employees that the workplace is safe. They also need to be flexible with hours and compensation if need be."

"The culture of the company is the single most important factor in attracting and keeping the best people," Spiegel explains. "A culture of inclusiveness and respect, and one that provides growth opportunities, attracts and keeps employees happy." If you have loyal and reliable staff, when a position becomes available, the first place to look is inside.

"Someone already employed in the organization may be capable of and agreeable to filling the spot. This is the best outcome, as all parties have proven themselves and are willing to commit to each other's success." An employer's responsibility is to 'walk the walk' and behave accordingly."

### Hire for Attitude

Once a candidate is hired, the best way to ensure success may be with a robust on-boarding process that includes providing a mentor, scheduled training, and listening closely to the person's needs and suggestions, says Spiegel. "A 30-day probation period written in the employment agreement will provide an opportunity for a backdoor if it doesn't work out." Very often it will be a clear to the employee as it is to management when the job is not a good fit. All businesses should have a try-out or probationary period.

### Four Categories of Employees

- WANDERERS** These are people who traditionally come and go.
- FILLERS** These are workers who are basically unhappy but stay anyway.
- ACHIEVERS** These are the people who enjoy the job and work for the challenge, not the money.
- KEEPERS** These workers stay because they like their work and consider themselves a part of the company.

To quote Barbara Streisand, "People who need people are the luckiest people in the world." Let's be kind to each other. **RS&G**