How to Effectively Onboard Your New Employees

By Howard Riell

Among the most critical and challenging steps for any startup or growing restaurant concept is staffing. Finding and hiring staff can test the skills of even experienced owners and managers. Onboarding, the process of integrating new employees into an organization, is perhaps less talked about than recruiting; however, it is no less crucial to the success of a restaurant.

Plan every detail: Welcoming a new hire onboard should be a well-thought-out process so that the new employee can be set up for success, says **Arlene Spiegel, president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates in New York City. It's much like a recipe that a chef uses to bake a cake.** It requires detailed ingredients and procedures to yield a consistent result. Operators would also be well served by preparing a concise policy and procedure guide that outlines the do's and don'ts, as well as a hospitality guide that outlines the employee's relationship to the guest and co-workers.

Assign a mentor: Spiegel's recommendations for handling onboarding properly include creating 30, 60, and 90-day **orientation plans for new hires and assigning a mentor** and tour guide that exemplifies the culture and behavior of the organization/company.

Walk the walk: Spiegel believes it is not enough to have a beautifully written mission statement in the company's internal manuals. **Leadership and ownership need to lead by example.** Daily/shift meetings with both front and back-of-the-house staff should always include a core guiding principal and hospitality philosophy in addition to the specials of the day.

Onboarding Mistakes to Avoid

"Restaurant owners go wrong when they let any employees fall through the cracks, especially new hires," says Arlene Spiegel. They should also provide regular performance reviews, sometimes spontaneous, if needed. It is also helpful to listen to new hires' observations and suggestions, she adds, they have a fresh eye on the operation and may have good ideas. **Finally, managers need to be consistent with all employee rules, regulations and standards.**

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