

NO TRAIN?

Developing and delivering a training program that gets results.

NO GAIN!

*The more you expect from
a person, the more you have
to train them.*

Geoff Bailey, Colorado Restaurateur

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Identify Objectives and Standards

Many managers prefer action to research. They are hands-on, ready to jump right in to solving problems. Perhaps you're the same. If so, it can be difficult to remove yourself from the hustle and bustle of the operation and examine the jobs with a critical eye. Therefore, you must schedule real time in the workday to conduct the needs analysis, perform the research, survey the employees and put a training plan together.

To outline your own plan for successful training, use the following four-step process:

- 1. Define your objectives.** This answers the all-important question, "Why am I doing this?" It also determines which employees need new training. A word of caution: Don't plan to take on a total revamp of every position in your operation all at once. This is a process. Start with one position, complete the analysis, plan the training and move on to the next position. You'll become more efficient and effective after performing a couple of them.

Defining objectives identifies gaps between current performance and expected standards and demonstrates whether or not training will address those gaps. The information generated will also be useful when measuring your training program's effectiveness, and it will help justify additional spending on training or just make the training more cost effective.

- 2. Figure out what information you'll need and where you're going to get it.** This process identifies the importance of specific tasks of a job and whether or not they're truly need-to-know. It also defines where and how you'll get that information:

- Job descriptions
- Employee surveys
- Guest surveys
- Complaint and compliment letters
- Performance appraisals
- Current training programs
- Competitor observations
- Other or outside training programs
- Financial statements

3. Collect the information. Set up interviews with employees, ask to speak with guests or develop a simple questionnaire and provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope for their convenience. Schedule your shifts for observing performance and so on.

4. Analyze the information you've collected and prepare your plan. The information highlights recurring problems, needs your employees may have and things that have been hurting your employee performance. The information will identify solutions that come from training and solutions that come from other sources.

If you've followed the plan up to now, you know:

- What tasks make up the job being analyzed.
- Which tasks are essential to the successful execution of the job.
- Whether or not the gaps between performance and standards are training-related.

As you define your training objectives, be both specific and assertive in describing the tasks and expected standards. Vague, wishy-washy directives only confuse people.

Don't say: Understands the menu.

Do say: Verbally describes menu items to inquiring customers.

Don't say: Knows menu abbreviations and how to ring up food items.

Do say: Passes written test on menu abbreviations, correctly punches all orders into POS computer and audits the guest check.

There's an old restaurant saying: "Guests don't care about what you know — they only care about what you do!" So if your objectives are well-defined and you've covered all the bases, your guests will like what you and your servers are doing.

The graphic features the word "Chapter" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, positioned inside a large, thin orange circle. Below and to the right of this circle is a smaller, thick black oval containing the word "FOUR" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

Chapter
FOUR

CHAPTER 4:

Great Expectations

Think about the restaurant environment. To say it's hectic is an understatement. On any given shift, the kitchen may run out of the daily special, someone might drop a tray of food in the dining room, a cook might cut a finger when the wheel is full of orders, and a customer might decide to yell at your teenage host.

Seldom do things run as smoothly as you would like them to and you need to remember this when you plan your training. Attempting to teach the ideal behavior in a real-world environment serves no one's best interests and can create a sense of disillusionment and failure for a new employee.

For example, one grill cook training program attempted to teach the use of a bi-therm for measuring the doneness of all steaks. It was a standard of performance for the position. Cooks were issued their own bi-therms, taught how to read them, then given tests on necessary steak temperatures and doneness profiles. They even practiced using the tool on one or two steaks that they cooked toward the end of their training shifts when it was slow.

Great training idea, right? Well, the real world was more like this. On any given night, regardless of how busy it was, only one grill cook was scheduled and the restaurant had more than 250 seats. To top it all off, steaks comprised 70% of the product mix. At any given time, the grill could be covered with more than 50 steaks! Trying to use a bi-therm on all of them was completely impractical. The time it would take for the needle to rise to temperature would back up production to the point of over-cooking other steaks, consequently delaying the loading of new orders. A great idea on paper, but completely impractical when trying to run a successful kitchen.

Be ready to establish standards of performance that meet your expectations and your guests' expectations once training is complete and the new hire is scheduled for shifts. How well is this new person expected to perform a group of tasks after initial instruction and some practice? Don't expect your brand-new host to be able to quote an accurate wait time on the busiest night of the week as skillfully as your seasoned hosts can.

Your training has to take the experience factor into account. You can set different expectations for the server on the first day and the 30th day of work. Make sure you and new hires understand this. Let them know you'll be expecting them to improve with each shift.

Remember, a key element of successful leadership is the ability to set up a series of small wins for your staff. This is especially true when talking about a training program. If you do this, you reduce turnover and increase the efficiency and expertise of your staff. Everyone wins.

*Employees can't be
empowered until you
train them.*

Paul Kazarian