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## Darden's Back-to-Basics Approach



Darden, a multi-brand restaurant company operating over 1,800 locations, is taking a back-to-basics approach, focusing on staff training, retention and leveraging data insights.

“Our restaurant teams continue to execute at a high level by

remaining focused on our back-to-basics operating philosophy anchored in food, service, and atmosphere. Our brand’s ongoing efforts to drive execution through simplification enable our restaurant teams to create great guest experiences as evidenced by a record-level performance we saw from many of our brands on key holidays throughout the year,” Rick Cardenas, President & CEO, said.

Mother’s Day 2023 was a high-water mark for the Olive Garden, “which achieved the highest sales day and sales week in their history during the week of Mother’s Day,” Cardenas shared. “This focus on being brilliant with the basics leads to strong guest satisfaction scores and our internal guest satisfaction metrics remain at or near all-time highs across our brands.”

As hiring and retaining good employees remains a challenge in hospitality businesses of all sizes, Darden is among the brands promoting from within. Nearly 1,300 hourly team members were promoted into its manager-in-training program and 32-0 managers were promoted to General Manager or Managing Partner positions.

Read the full article to hear more about how the Back-to-Basics approach is going strong for Darden!

Source: Anna Wolfe, Hospitality Technology

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## How to See Conflict as a Benefit

Many leaders view conflict as a problem to be avoided, but conflict is not the real problem: Mismanagement is. Seeing conflict as a problem builds invisible structures, (mindsets, narratives, emotions, and desires) that contribute to mismanagement such as avoiding, aggression or appeasing. Interpreting conflict as a benefit flips the switch from avoidance to advancement in leadership capability.



Here are 4 four ways to view conflict as a benefit and catalyst for leadership growth.

1. Transform anger
2. Inspire change
3. Prioritize clarity
4. Exemplify personal growth

Don't interpret conflict as a problem to avoid, or an obstacle to overcome. Change your interpretation to see conflict as a way to transform anger, inspire change, prioritize clarity and grow personally.

Dive deep into the 4 steps above and check out the complete article!

Source: Marlene Chism, SmartBrief

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## 8 Best Practices for Effective Restaurant Communication

Running an amazing eatery relies, at least in part, on having top-tier restaurant communication - but how can you ensure this?

This article covers some useful tips to follow if you want to boost your communication and



make a splash in the restaurant industry. These will help you get it right every time and ensure you're streamlining communication processes wherever possible.

There are two kinds of restaurant

communication: internal and external. Firstly, internal communication is the one that takes place between team members or teams. Anytime one of your waitstaff relays a customer's order to the kitchen, that's internal communication in action. Likewise, managers allocating shifts, handling employee complaints, delegating tasks, or discussion ideas are all examples of internal comms.

External communication, on the other hand, takes place between your restaurant and its customers. For example, whenever you put out promotional material, you're engaging in external communication.

Restaurant communication sits at the heart of teamwork-you can't work well as a collective without first knowing how to speak to one another. That's why effective restaurant comms are the key to success, and why they keep things running smoothly on a daily basis.

Don't let a lack of communication impact your operation negatively – put these best practices to use!

*Source: Laura-Andreea Voicu, Oracle GloriaFood*

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## Wisconsin Restaurants are Starting to Receive ERC Dollars

The Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERC/ERTC) provides up to \$26,000 per employee to businesses with under 500 employees impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Because amended tax returns can be filed for up to 3 years, the ERC remains an incredible financial resource you can access today.

Working with our Preferred Partner, [Adesso Capital](#), the WRA is proud to have driven over \$12 million in funds directly to Wisconsin restaurant operators.

**The average Wisconsin restaurant operator has received \$150,000 back from the IRS through the ERC program.** Regardless of whether you received PPP funds, hired different staff, or even reduced total headcount during the pandemic, you are likely eligible

for funds. You are entitled to them, and so the IRS will not run out of funds to support this program.

**Some businesses assumed that they didn't qualify or their CPAs told them it was too complicated to file, but then using Adesso as their ERC expert they found that they did meet the government rules and received ERC funds.**

If you haven't already, please take 10 minutes with one of the incredible Adesso customer care team members to do an assessment on your business. You can do this over the phone, or online via their [ERC portal](#). Don't miss out on funds that are owed to you.

It takes the IRS about 7-9 months to process so the sooner you start the process the sooner you will get your money.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to WRA team member Dawn Faris at [dfaris@wirerestaurant.org](mailto:dfaris@wirerestaurant.org) / 608.444.9481.



*"Working with Adesso to apply for ERC was a great experience for us! Although we were initially skeptical, WRA's endorsement gave us assurance that the program was legitimate. We received our funds that we don't have to pay back and have WRA and Adesso to thank for that."*

Lars Johnson  
Al Johnson's Restaurant & Butik  
Sister Bay, WI

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## Tyson Move Aims at Workforce Support

Tyson Foods is working with Minneapolis-based Joshin, a tech company that deals with special needs and neurological disabilities care, to provide support to its workforce.

"We work hard each day to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace with actions that will positively



impact all team members and create a legacy of belonging for the future,” Paul E. Davis, Vice President and Chief Equity, Inclusion & Diversity Officer at Tyson Foods said in a statement. “This partnership with Joshin gives us the tools and resources to have a more open dialogue with team members and build connectivity across the company.”

As part of the Tyson pilot program, Joshin will, “support improved accommodations processes, inclusive hiring and interviewing, and employee policies,” according to Joshin. The program will be aimed at Tyson workers, their families, and their work teams through specialized care, coaching and training.

Citing information from the Center for Talent Innovation, Joshin said 62% of disabled employees have a non-visible disability. Most employees with disabilities say they don’t feel comfortable disclosing their disability to employers.

*Source: John Magsam, Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*

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## This Restaurant Closes for 4 Weeks Every Year to Give its Workers a Vacation



At the “fine-casual” Birdie’s in Austin, Texas, the restaurant closes for two weeks in summer and two weeks in winter to allow all workers paid time off that is truly off.

The idea of taking a real vacation is problematic in the restaurant industry. Though paid vacation is increasingly a benefit being offered in the post-Covid era, it remains a challenge to cover hourly worker shifts on super-lean teams; And it can seem near impossible for managers to truly unplug when they know how much can go wrong in their absence.

But Arjav Ezekiel and Tracy Malechek-Ezekiel, husband-and-wife owners of the restaurant Birdie’s in Austin, Texas, have found a way to both give their team a real vacation – and take one themselves.

Birdie’s closes twice each year for two-week periods – two weeks in mid-August and two weeks around Christmas through early January.

During that time, workers are paid. The rate varies, but hourly workers receive roughly

about \$13 to \$14 per hour based on their typical weekly schedules. Birdie's operates on a five-day week (closed Sundays and Mondays), so schedules are fairly steady, said Ezekiel.

It's not a cheap thing to do, to say the least, he said. Closing for that much vacation means mission out on about one month of revenue.

But that's not the way the couple looks at it. Read the complete article to learn more about this interesting concept!

*Source: Lisa Jennings, Restaurant Business*

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