



HOW TO BECOME A PREFERRED EMPLOYER IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY



Employee turnover is a battle that many owners face regularly.

But is it a necessary battle? What if you could make some business changes that could **ensure a happy team** that then dramatically increases your employee retention?

We're no longer in a market where people are just happy to have a job that gets them a paycheck. **They want more.** And they have many other options and can easily move on to another employer if they feel that you're not matching what they need.

Below are some tips to help get you out of the non-stop circle of recruiting, hiring and training. Create a business brand that **generates positive word of mouth** for being known as the preferred employer in your community.

Be that place people WANT to work at!

TOP CHARACTERISTICS THAT WILL HELP YOU RETAIN A STRONG TEAM

Lead with Respect

Some owners talk about the need to “get another body in to cover a shift”. A slight word adjustment makes your team members feel like just that—a part of your team. Referencing an employee as an hourly commodity makes them feel like they’re just there to do a specific task. People want to feel like they are part of something bigger and contributing to the success of the business. Take a moment to personally connect with each of your team members every day so they know that they’re appreciated.



THOUGHT FROM A PEER

“I use the ‘lead from the bottom’ philosophy in my restaurant. The way I see it, my job and that of my managers is to do WHATEVER is needed to support the team. Period. My only goal is that my staff make money... because if they don’t, I don’t either.”

Kris Larson
Becket's in Oshkosh



Engage Your Staff in Decisions

Employees appreciate when employers take the time to listen to suggestions that will improve their work environment.

Consider holding staff meetings that encourages everyone to add to the conversation. Meetings like this can be wonderful brainstorming opportunities. When staff members feel like they are part of problem solving or idea generating, they'll feel a deeper connection of belonging to the business.



THOUGHT FROM A PEER

"We set up a management team at The Grumpy Troll to turn over day-to-day decisions to the key employees. This team includes both our front of house and heart of house who meet on a weekly basis. They are responsible for bringing ideas and issues from their areas and setting restaurant policy. As owners, we meet with the team monthly so they have the ability to also direct larger strategic issues."

Robin Pharo

The Grumpy Troll in Mt Horeb



THOUGHT FROM A PEER

"We've found that when we engage our teammates in decision making they take personal pride and responsibility for the decision and help to implement whatever change or improvement we're making. The team also deserves to hear "the why" behind every decision made without them. When people know the why, they're more likely to get onboard."

Erin Vranas

Parthenon Gyros in Madison

wirestaurant.org



Embrace the Differences

We're all different with unique personalities and skills. And the generations that we are born into create defining differences. This also means that not everyone communicates in the same way or responds to communications in the same way. Get to know your staff and what you need to do to bring out the best in them. This chart provides some things to consider when leading your multi-generational team.

Born	2001 - 2020	1981 - 2000	1965 - 1980	1946 - 1964
Attributes	Entrepreneurial, progressive, less focused.	Competitive, civic-minded, achievement-oriented.	Laid back, low-key, informal, skeptical, independent.	Optimistic, competitive, workaholic, team-oriented.
Motivated By	Diversity, personalization, individuality & creativity.	Responsibility & the quality of their manager.	Gen X aka The Doer	Diversity, work-life balance, personal-professional interests rather than the company's interest.
Communication Style	Gen Z aka iGen	Does everything on their phone. Instant messaging, texts and social media.	Gen Y aka Millennials	Instant messaging, texts and email.
Employers Should	Provide work-life balance; allow them to be self-directed and independent.	Get to know them personally; manage by results; be flexible on their schedule; provide immediate feedback.		Give immediate feedback; provide flexible schedule and work-life balance; extend personal development.
Values	Authenticity, truth and connectivity. While they've grown up digitally connected, they value person-to-person interactions.	Meaningful work that allows them to grow and use their creative skills. Using technology to make work more efficient.		Friendly, flexible workplaces. Seeks out efficiency and innovation.
Type of Employee	Wants clear directions, flexibility and transparency. Comes up with out of the box solutions. Always curious and willing to learn.	Looks for skills training mentorship and consistent feedback to achieve longevity at a company. Will work in multiple jobs before finding the right career fit.		Credited for the concept of work-life balance. They're independent with an entrepreneurial spirit. Results-driven self-starter.
				Not afraid to take risks to pursue their goals. Strives to achieve lifestyle success.
				Job-centered mindset who prioritizes career ambition and financial success. Challenges the status quo. Multi-tasker that lives to work.

THOUGHT FROM A PEER

"In each of our locations we have around 25 people—that is 25 voices, 25 different opinions, and 25 different strengths. It is so important first to KNOW what those strengths are, and then encourage your team to use their strengths. Not only do people do a better job when they're doing something they're naturally good at, they will enjoy it more. Why try to teach someone to write with the opposite hand when we can utilize someone's natural talents—it's a win win! Since the key is knowing what those are, we use different tools in our company—my favorite is the Enneagram! We also use DISC Profile & Strengthfinders—it's always super helpful for the team to understand themselves, and even more importantly, have empathy for each other and their differences. I say quite often—most people are coming from a place of generosity—so it's extremely important that we understand each other and not assume the worst. Be a curious leader!"



Morgan Schnabl

Brunch in Milwaukee



Know Your Employees

You absolutely have to take the time to get to know your team members. They will be committed to your business if they feel leadership cares about them, hears them and treats them well. Your team will care when they know YOU care.

Employee Appreciation

Recognize your employees' achievements when they perform well. Maybe a gift card to a local business, extra time off, or even a monetary bonus for reaching goals are great ways to show gratitude. However, don't underestimate the power of verbal praise. It can go a long way in making your staff feel appreciated. Small things motivate people to continue being high performers.

THOUGHT FROM A PEER

*"Catch people doing things right. Too often people only get attention when they've done something wrong. It's very important to immediately and publicly acknowledge things done right and to praise progress. It's also just as important to catch and correct wrong actions right away and to gently, kindly and privately redirect to the correct way. Additionally, gifts are great, but it doesn't have to be all gifts all the time. People thrive off of genuine, positive praise. If they feel good coming to work, being around you and your team, they'll keep coming back. No money or gifts can buy loyalty that is earned through trust and consistent positive experiences. I highly recommend reading *Whale Done* by Kenneth Blanchard. We use his philosophies in our leader trainings."*



Erin Vranas

Parthenon Gyros in Madison

IN THEIR WORDS:

From Wisconsin Hospitality Employees



"We all help each other when we need it most."



"It's a place that allows me to learn new things every day."



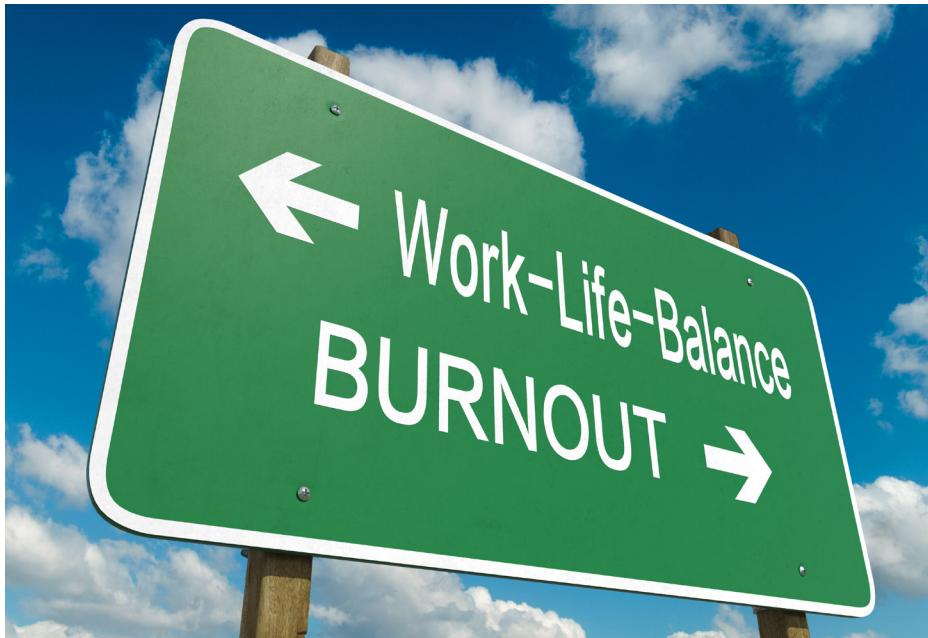
"I want to feel respected."

"It feels like I'm a part of a family."

Source: Survey conducted by the Wisconsin Restaurant Association of people employed in the hospitality industry.

Encourage Work-Life Balance

Don't burn your staff out. Working in a kitchen or as a server is tough work that requires you to be on your feet for long periods of time. Don't let your great workers become stressed out, exhausted and frustrated because they're having to pick up the slack. You may need to consider changing your hours of operation so you don't lose your great workers from being overworked. It's critical to acknowledge that employees have life outside of work.



Staff First

The hospitality industry has had a long history of promoting the idea to "never let a customer leave unhappy". But what about your staff? Your team is critical to delivering a great guest experience. So that same philosophy should be applied to your team.

THOUGHT FROM A PEER

"Without our people, we don't have a business. It is so important they are treated with the utmost respect and given every opportunity to grow and thrive. If someone leaves, we always want to be able to say we did every single thing we could to help that person grow in their role and gave them every opportunity. Never let anyone fall behind and always ask them how you can help. Encourage them give them autonomy over their area/section/station/restaurant/etc – let them own their role. Don't fault them for making decisions; celebrate their choices (as long as they are coming from a good place), learn from them, and ask questions."

Morgan Schnabl

Brunch in Milwaukee

Everyone Owns the Experience

Not many people function at their best when they feel like a boss is watching and judging their every move. Creating a culture where your staff understands the core values of your brand and process will give yourself, your employees and your customers greater satisfaction and a higher degree of productivity. When your team feels empowered to make on-the spot decisions, they'll take ownership in making the right decisions and appreciate that management trusts in them.



THOUGHT FROM A PEER

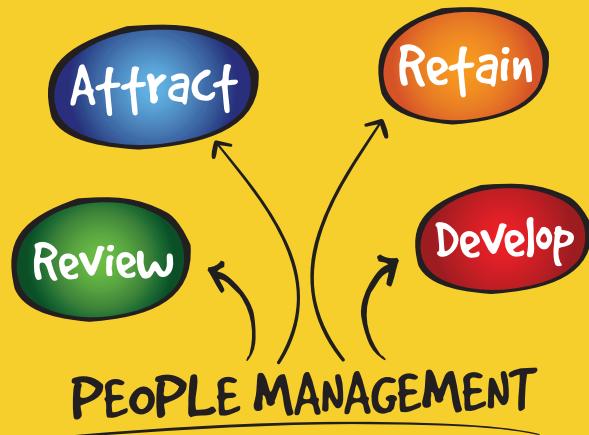
"I have found that autonomy is just about as important as money in making my team happy. I have a vow with everyone in my restaurant that I will never question a decision that they make unless it somehow actively goes against our common goal of having an excellent restaurant."

Kris Larson

Becket's in Oshkosh

Evaluate Whether Your Team Needs Resources & Support

Regularly check in with your team to make sure they have the knowledge and resources to do their jobs well. Sometimes simple things that you may have been unaware of could make a world of difference to their attitude and productivity.



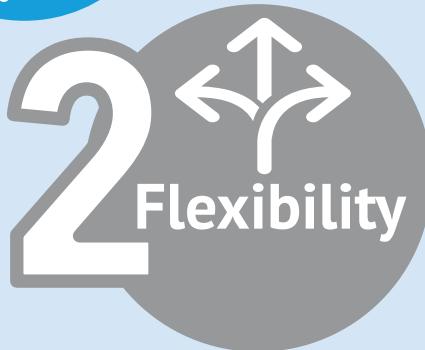
THOUGHT FROM A PEER

"We've found that our teammates thrive and are so much happier when they're confident. They're confident when expectations are clearly defined, they've had proper introductory training and access to growth and raise opportunities through ongoing training. We've created extensive training programs in all areas of our restaurant—orientation, new hire, several HACCP manager trainings, many levels of line trainings, leader trainings, and more. The front-end time and effort we invested in developing these programs was worth every second because the payoff has been amazing—happy teammates who know what they're doing, have growth and learning opportunities even in our one little restaurant, and very low turnover."

Erin Vranas

Parthenon Gyros in Madison

Top 5 perks that encourage team members to stay



Source: Survey conducted by the Wisconsin Restaurant Association of people employed in the hospitality industry.

EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IDEAS

- Gift cards to local stores, restaurants, gas stations or wellness places.
- Even just a \$5 gift card to a local coffee shop makes an impact!
- Retention bonuses
- Paid day off
- Greeting card with a personal message
- Free meals at your restaurant
- Congratulate your employees on social media
- Wall of Fame that's public to guests and/or staff
- Earn stars for larger awards like group outings
- Have a box of gifts that they can choose from
 - Water bottles, coffee mugs, local team gear... you get the idea!
- Primo parking
- An extended break or early finish
- Say “thanks” in front of their peers
- Celebrate milestones like birthdays, work anniversary, wedding anniversary

THOUGHT FROM A PEER

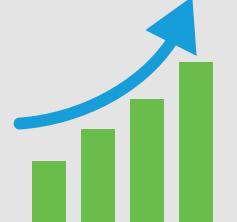
“In our interview process we always ask prospective teammates what would make them want to stay in a position for a long time. 95% of the time the answer is the environment. It’s all about the culture. People want to work with other great people so our standards must always remain high, even in a tight labor market. They also want to have fun at work and have the flexibility that will afford them work-life balance. They need to know there are growth opportunities and perks for jobs well done, and finally they need to be compensated well.”

Erin Vranas

Parthenon Gyros in Madison



Employee Engagement is Key to Employee Retention

 Compassion & Communication	 Culture is Key	 Encourage Growth	 Embrace Differences	 Inspire
Transparency and honesty	Work-life balance with flexible schedule	Offer professional and personal growth	Respect diversity	Invest in developing managers
Truly value your team members and personally connect with them	Treat staff as humans and not shift-fillers	Be clear about career path options	Acknowledge generational differences	Empower employees
Seek out ideas and concerns	Employee recognition	Provide real-time feedback	Be sensitive to social issues	Give meaning behind the work

Your Industry. Your Association. Your Community.

Our Workforce Mission:

Changing lives through hospitality, for people from all backgrounds, with training, education and pathways to opportunity.

About the WRA:

The Wisconsin Restaurant Association is the voice for Wisconsin's hospitality industry, bringing together a wide range of members from all across the state. The support of our members allows us to continue advocating on behalf of the industry and to provide critical information that ensures positive business growth.

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